# NISEI DESIGNS: CULTURAL PRODUCERS NEGOTIATING IDENTITIES DURING THE COLD WAR

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF HAWAIʻI AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
AMERICAN STUDIES

MAY 2017

By
Sanae Nakatani

Dissertation Committee:
Mari Yoshihara, Chairperson
Vernadette V. Gonzalez
Karen Kosasa
Yujin Yaguchi
Christine R. Yano

Keywords: Japanese Americans, U.S.-Japan relations, art, architecture, Cold War

## Table of Contents

**Acknowledgments**

I could not have written this dissertation without the help of my professors, friends, and family. First, I would like to thank my committee members for their mentorship, without which this project would not have been possible. Mari Yoshihara guided me throughout my writing process, always acknowledging the work I had done and clearly explaining what I still needed to do. Her sincere and disciplined attitude toward teaching and advising motivated me to study harder than I imagined I could. Through taking Vernadette V. Gonzalez's classes and serving as her graduate assistant, I learned important pedagogical practices to enhance students' learning experiences. Her dedication to teaching inspired me to work toward becoming a better educator. Karen Kosasa always carefully read my drafts and gave me detailed comments. It was a pleasure that the more I studied about art and architecture, the more topics we had in common to discuss. Through her engaging classes and public talks, Christine R. Yano opened my eyes to new approaches to studying Japanese American communities and U.S.-Japan cultural relations, which stimulated my own research. Yujin Yaguchi at the University of Tokyo helped me build my foundation as a graduate student. He believed in my potential and encouraged me to work on my Ph.D. with the professors at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa. He never failed to advise me over a meal every time he visited Hawai‘i. These five professors are my role models, and I hope someday I can be like them and effectively support students in pursuit of their academic goals.

I would also like to thank the individuals who have helped me in many ways. The members of my writing group supported me at every stage of developing this dissertation project. I deeply appreciate their constant encouragements and constructive comments. My student life in Hawai‘i was greatly enriched by Seiji Kawasaki, Lynn and Mel Murata, and their families who let me experience their parties, fishing excursions, Hawaiian music, and many more. I thank

them for their friendship and their advice on life and teaching. I am also grateful to Kazuyoshi Oshiumi, Tellme and John Uyesugi, and Steve and Junko Dyer for providing moral support through heartwarming conversations and meals.

My deep appreciation goes to all the institutions that provided me with financial support, without which I could not have begun or continued my study abroad: the Fulbright Program, the Rotary Foundation, the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa, and the East-West Center. I would also like to thank the archivists and librarians at the Noguchi Museum, the James A. Michener Art Museum, the National Archives, the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian, Wayne State University’s Walter P. Reuther Library, and the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s Hamilton Library for making my research activities smooth and enjoyable.

Finally, I would like to mention my parents who have been the oldest and most faithful cheerleaders—listening to my uncooked ideas, reading some of the books I was reading, and trying to understand what I felt passionate about. My family patiently encouraged me throughout my studies in Hawai‘i, finding joy in my academic progress. I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

**Abstract**

This dissertation examines the lives and works of three Nisei cultural producers—sculptor Isamu Noguchi, woodworker George Nakashima, and architect Minoru Yamasaki—during the Cold War. The three men deployed their malleable identities through their productive activities and challenged seemingly fixed boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, and nation. The three Nisei men became both subjects and agents of the discursive force of Cold War Orientalism, which Christina Klein defines as America's desire to consume Asia and integrate it into the Western sphere of influence.

The three men's successes became objects of consumption as they were weaved into a Japanese American version of the popular American dream narrative: while they suffered from prewar and wartime racism, their endurance, diligence, and entrepreneurship helped them become successful in competitive American society. The three men did not completely subscribe to the notion of color-blind meritocracy; instead, they criticized race issues and took a defiant attitude toward being passively represented as model minorities who were perpetually foreign and obedient to the status quo.

Being Americans of Japanese ancestry worked to their advantage when Japanese culture regained popularity after World War II, but it also made them and their works vulnerable to critics' and consumers' Orientalizing lens. They were often expected to provide "authentic" Japanese designs. They carefully promoted the understanding that their works were a combination of their imaginative interpretations of ideas from Japan and their workmanship based on Euro-American education and training. They claimed that this fusion of concepts and methods resulted in a truly second-generation American creation rather than an obsolete

eclecticism. Thus, they defied the discursive power that attempted to Other them and their works as exotic.

The experiences in different parts of the world led Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki to reflect on the Eurocentric practices and views of the American architectural and art worlds. While the three Nisei men took advantage of their unique image as the bridge between the East and the West to stimulate potential clients' interests in their works, they also rejected working merely as instruments of Cold War Orientalism. They occasionally challenged the assumed cultural hierarchy of Euro-American cultures over the others and argued the importance of learning from non-Western forms of expressions and values.

## Introduction

The germ of this dissertation began to form about ten years ago when I found Masayo Duus's *Isamu Noguchi: shukumei no ekkyosha* on a library shelf.[1] Reading the book, I was struck by the dramatic life that this mixed-race Japanese American sculptor led. Because of Noguchi's distinguished cultural capital and his extraordinary family background, which differentiated him from the majority of his generation, few scholars treated his life as a part of Japanese American history. Duus, going against the grain, thoroughly examined Noguchi's records and shed light on his complicated identity as a second-generation Japanese American, or Nisei. As I further researched scholarship on Nisei cultural producers, I found two other men who had several credentials similar to those of Noguchi: woodworker George Nakashima and architect Minoru Yamasaki. First, they had their autobiographies published both in English and Japanese. Secondly, they had archival documents collected and organized under their names. Lastly, they received the Nisei of the Biennium Award from the Japanese American Citizens League (hereafter referred to as JACL), arguably the most powerful and historical institution organized by an elite Nisei group. Nakashima and Yamasaki, in addition to Noguchi, turned out to be rare figures who left a rich body of materials, written by themselves and by others, that enabled me to take a close look at their lives and explore an aspect of Japanese American history that has not been fully uncovered heretofore.

Despite the continued interest in these individual Nisei cultural producers, there has hardly been an attempt to comparatively discuss their lives and works in the context of Japanese American history due to the lack of their explicit ties to Japanese American communities. Unlike

[1] Masayo Duus, *Isamu Noguchi: shukumei no ekkyosha* (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2003), later translated into English under the title *Isamu Noguchi: Journey without Borders* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

the majority of the Nisei men who succeeded their family businesses or received vocational training that would help them get a job after graduating from college, Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki were privileged enough to follow their enthusiasm for the arts. Working in the white-dominated fields of sculpture, woodworking, and architecture, the three Nisei cultural producers' socioeconomic connections to Japanese American communities decreased in the post-World War II period. Despite these differences between the three men and the majority of their Nisei peers, they all shared the challenging experience of forming and negotiating their identities in a time when there were two dominant and polarized types of representations of the Japanese American man: the patriotic soldier/veteran, which was formed through the narratives of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team's tremendous contribution and sacrifice to war effort, and the emasculated Asian male figure in the popular media, especially Hollywood movies. As cultural producers, Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki navigated their ways through the discursive practices that emphasized the Japanese American man's patriotic masculinity or caricatured femininity and enacted their agency and cultural capital to create unique self-images that were most suitable to promote their businesses.

This dissertation shows how these individual Nisei men deployed their malleable identities through their productive activities and artistic expressions and challenged seemingly fixed boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, and nation. I believe that a close analysis of how they dealt with the discourses of Othering at an individual level will be an important addition to Japanese American historiography, in which narratives that speak of generalizable experiences tend to overshadow individual stories. The purpose of this dissertation is to improve our knowledge on individual Nisei's experiences, which contributes to our understanding on the inner diversity of Japanese American history more fully.

In this dissertation, I use the term "cultural producer" to emphasize Noguchi's, Nakashima's, and Yamasaki's impacts on what Pierre Bourdieu calls the fields of cultural production. I regard not only artists but also architects as cultural producers. Bourdieu argues that people who are privileged enough to stay in financially risky positions such as those in the artistic and literary spheres are the ones who "have also had the advantage of not having to devote time and energy to secondary, 'bread-and-butter' activities."[2] Here, Bourdieu emphasizes the autonomy and economic privilege of the agents in the fields of art and literature. Scholars have discussed whether architecture could also be included in the fields of cultural production. Architecture is customarily differentiated from art and literature because of the lesser degree of freedom and flexibility that it gives to its agents; architects need to realize clients' desires and adhere to technological standards to ensure buildings' safety. Despite this difference, Hélène Lipstadt points out that there is an important analogy to be made between the field of architecture and those of art and literature. She mentions that when architects enter into competitions, "they enjoy a relative autonomy from the economic and power fields. Any competition that is judged by a jury that is (relatively) independent of the client, even one in which the largest international corporate firms participate, creates a moment in which architects temporarily operate as far from external determination as architecture can allow."[3] Based on the understanding that architects in competitions behave in a similar way as artists and writers do, I analyze Yamasaki along with Noguchi and Nakashima as a cultural producer who managed to mobilize their cultural resources to achieve economic and symbolic profits.

---

[2] Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 68.
[3] Hélène Lipstadt, "Can 'Art Professions' Be Bourdieuean Fields of Cultural Production? The Case of the Architecture Competition," *Cultural Studies* 17 (2003): 410.

By calling them cultural "producers," I emphasize their agency in actively negotiating their cultural and professional identities through their artistic and architectural activities. I examine not only their actual material products and designs but also their challenges to the conventional understanding of cultures as fixed categories, through which they produced new meanings for their works. While they took advantage of the Cold War era's Japan boom and their ethnic identity to promote their works, they also consciously avoided the conventional practice of exoticizing and separating Japanese culture from Western culture. They suggested that the values that they associated with Japanese culture could potentially contribute to the betterment of the American way of life, thereby asserting their legitimate positions as Japanese American cultural producers in their respective fields and American society at large.

**Theoretical Framework**

This dissertation is informed by, and aims to contribute to, discussions in two fields of scholarship: Japanese American history and Cold War art and architectural history. This interdisciplinary approach allows me to explore how discourses on the three Nisei's race, ethnicity, culture, and nation informed their art and architectural productions and identity processes in the Cold War context.

In the 1980s, Japanese American scholars began writing revisionist history, compiling a wide array of information ranging from American and Japanese government records to community newspapers and interviews, to provide a Japanese American account of their own history. Yuji Ichioka's *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* and Ronald T. Takaki's *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*

were among the pioneering works that laid the foundation for subsequent scholarship to develop the field in diverse ways.[4]

While the pioneering studies of Japanese American history primarily focused on the common experiences of immigrating and adjusting to the new land, later works have expanded the scope of research, emphasizing the heterogeneity of Japanese American experiences. The works by Lon Kurashige and Eiichiro Azuma are examples that shed light on the complexities of intra-community relationships.[5]

My study aims to extend the research into how individual Japanese Americans formed their history and their own identities in different contexts. In *Asian Americans*, Sucheng Chan points out that while minority groups have often been cast as victims in American history, they are simultaneously "agents of history," and "they make choices that shape their lives even when these may be severely limited by conditions beyond their control."[6] Unpacking the three Nisei cultural producers' agency will contribute to the body of scholarship on postwar forms of Japanese American lives, which Greg Robinson argues needs to be developed further to understand Japanese American past and present experiences more comprehensively.[7]

My research also draws insights from Cold War art and architectural history. Scholars such as Serge Guilbaut, Ron Robin, Jane C. Loeffler, and Naima Prevots have pointed out that

---

[4] Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: Free Press, 1988); Ronald T. Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989).
[5] Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press 2002); Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
[6] Sucheng Chan, *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), xiii.
[7] Greg Robinson, *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 1.

the particular political and sociocultural circumstances of the Cold War influenced the cultural productions of the period in multilayered ways. They convincingly demonstrate that the U.S. government propagated freedom, equality, and democracy through exporting American art, architecture, and music, which supposedly reflected those values, to key sites around the world in its ideological war against the Soviet Union.[8] Not only internationally but also domestically, the United States had to win the support of the public for its claim that the world it led was better than the one led by the Soviet Union. In this political climate, Penny M. Von Eschen argues, African American jazz musicians played the role of communicating the messages of racial tolerance and cultural diversity within and outside the United States, while "interven[ing] in official narratives and play[ing] their own changes on Cold War perspectives."[9] This dissertation investigates how the Nisei cultural producers similarly and differently negotiated the expectations of representing the benefits of American democracy and meritocracy and challenged stereotypes to establish unique status of their own.

I focus particularly on the 1950s and 1960s in probing the three Nisei's activities, since these decades demanded their most careful attention in balancing their claims of Japanese heritage and their positions in the fields of American cultural production. When the United States and the Soviet Union fought over their spheres of influence in Asia, which would culminate in the war in Vietnam, American popular interest in Asian cultures increased. In this sociopolitical climate, Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki readily assumed the role of the bridge between

---

[8] Serge Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983); Ron Robin, *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad, 1900–1965* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992); Jane C. Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998); Naima Prevots, *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1998).

[9] Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 4, 25.

Japan and the United States. While they benefitted from their ancestral ties in establishing their unique values as cultural producers, they needed to make sure that their ethnicity did not define their cultural identities and products. This early part of the Cold War preceded the emergence of robust expressions of multiculturalism following the Civil Rights Movement. In addition, Japan was not yet an economic giant that it was to become, and the American public commonly imagined the country to be in an old, premodern status. These situations required them to avoid establishing a strong essential connection between the country and themselves. They had to navigate their ways through discourses of Orientalism to maintain their agency in developing their professional identities. This dissertation closely examines how they managed to walk this precarious terrain.

**Nisei Identity and Cold War Orientalism**

While Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki had begun to exhibit their extraordinary talent in the prewar era, they were not spared from the hardest reality that the Nisei faced during World War II. When President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 demanded the incarceration of all West Coast residents of Japanese ancestry, they suddenly found themselves labeled as "enemy aliens" despite the fact that they were native-born Americans. The war between the United States and Japan tragically affected everyone of Japanese descent in the U.S. proper and the U.S. territories of Hawai'i and Alaska to varying degrees. Although the three Nisei men's wartime experiences were somewhat different from those who lived within barbed wire throughout the war, they were no exceptions to wartime racism.

The illegitimate son of Japanese poet Yonejiro Noguchi and American educator and editor Leonie Gilmour, Isamu Noguchi (1904-1988) spent his childhood in Japan and trained as

an artist in the United States and Europe. Frequently traveling around the world for his studies and projects gave him little opportunity to cultivate a sense of being a Nisei. However, Pearl Harbor changed all this. He recounted:

> With a flash I realized I was no longer the sculptor alone. I was not just American but Nisei. A Japanese-American. (I had received a medal from somewhere; 'Nisei of the year' just before leaving New York). I felt I must do something. But first I had to get to know my fellow Nisei; I had had no reason previously to seek them out as a group. Secondly, I sought out those of us who were sympathetic and with whom I thought I could work to counteract the bigoted hysteria that soon appeared in the press. I organized a group called "Nisei Writers and Artists for Democracy." All to no avail. With the evacuation command I escaped from California (I was luckily a New Yorker) and went to Washington, thinking to make myself useful. Instead, I met John Collier of the American Indian Service. One of the projected war relocation camps was to be situated on Indian territory under his jurisdiction at Poston, Arizona, and he suggested that I might be of help there in its development. Thus I willfully became a part of humanity uprooted.[10]

Thus, Noguchi discovered his Nisei identity and the mission to help his people, whose paths had rarely crossed his. His voluntary incarceration in the camp was only temporary—the reason of which I explore in chapter 1—but his racial awareness, heightened through this experience, remained forever.

Unlike Noguchi, who "willfully became a part of humanity uprooted," George Nakashima (1905-1990) found himself as a part of Japanese American Seattleites who were rounded up and "put in concentration camps," which happened shortly after his return from his

[10] Isamu Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 25.

stays in France, Japan, and India.[11] Before his incarceration, he had earned $80 per week doing architectural design. However, afterwards, he earned only $16 per month teaching drafting at the Wartime Civilian Control Administration's Assembly Center in Portland, Oregon and $19 per month designing model rooms at the War Relocation Authority's (hereafter referred to as WRA) Minidoka camp in Hunt, Idaho.[12] Being incarcerated with the group from which he had long been distant, and being deprived of the job and wage he deserved, Nakashima was forced into realizing that his race controlled what he could be and what he could do.

While Noguchi and Nakashima spent some time in the camps, Minoru Yamasaki (1912-1986) was able to escape that fate by staying on the East Coast, which was exempt from the evacuation order. However, his parents who lived in Seattle were among the targets of expulsion from the West Coast. He recounted that shortly after Pearl Harbor

> came the government decision to move the West-Coast Japanese into "relocation centers," which we all regarded as concentration camps. I could not bear the idea of my parents going to a concentration camp, and I urged them to come to New York and live with us in our one-bedroom apartment.[13]

While Yamasaki and his wife were not subjected to the outright suspension of their citizenship rights, his father, who had been a loyal employee at a shoe store for twenty-five years, was fired soon after Japan mounted war against the United States.[14] Like Nakashima, Yamasaki used the words "concentration camps" to connect the incarceration of Japanese Americans to the

---

[11] George Nakashima, *The Soul of a Tree: A Woodworker's Reflections* (New York: Kodansha International, 1981), 69.
[12] "Nakashima, George Katsutoshi," Japanese-American Internee Data File, Record Group 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.
[13] Minoru Yamasaki, *A Life in Architecture* (New York: Weatherhill, 1979), 21.
[14] Ibid.

persecution of Jews in Europe, indicating his understanding that what the government alleged as "military necessity" was in fact a form of racial profiling.

These wartime experiences left an indelible impression on the minds of the three men that the seemingly inclusive American ideology of democracy could exclude and work against them as a racial minority. Being lumped together as "enemy aliens" made them realize that their Japanese Americanness was an inseparable part of who they were. Confined within barbed wire, Nakashima tried to maintain dignity as a cultural producer through apprenticing with an old Issei carpenter to inherit the cultural knowledge of woodworking.[15] Noguchi, after managing to get himself out of the Poston camp, worked with Yamasaki to serve as vice-chairmen for the Arts Council of Japanese Americans for Democracy, organizing the efforts of Japanese American artists, writers, and musicians to fight against fascism and to promote a public understanding of Japanese Americans' loyalty.[16] In these ways, they confronted the reality in which they were brutally labeled as *personae non gratae*.

The end of the war terminated the three men's short but intense and direct commitments to Japanese American communities and politics. Released from the camp, Nakashima devoted himself to reestablishing his and his family's lives in the countryside of Pennsylvania. Noguchi and Yamasaki withdrew from political activities and instead immersed themselves in professional development. Noguchi romanticized this moment in his 1968 autobiography: "Freedom earned has a quality of assurance. The deep depression that comes with living under a cloud of suspicion, which we as Nisei experienced, lifted, and was followed by tranquility. I was free finally of causes and disillusioned with mutuality. I resolved henceforth to be an artist

[15] Nakashima, *The Soul*, 69–70.
[16] Masayo Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 185.

only."[17] Yamasaki similarly explained his choice to focus on architecture in 1959: "A long time ago I used to go around ringing doorbells and asking people to vote the liberal way. I spent a lot of time working on the Japanese-American situation. But as I grow older in life I find that it is really better to concentrate on a smaller area."[18] Being liberated from the immediate pressure to prove their Americanism or fight for survival, Nakashima, Noguchi, Yamasaki, and other Japanese Americans began to explore new identities, not predetermined by how others defined them, as they rebuilt their lives in the postwar period.

The disengagement from community affairs, however, did not mean that their racial consciousness faded away. While they became distant from the centers of cultural, political, economic, and social activities of large Japanese American communities in cities such as Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, Chicago, and New York, they did not stop thinking critically about American race relations. In fact, these issues continued to be at the core of their concerns and influenced their views and identities as they carved out careers for themselves after the war.

**Literature Review**

Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki possessed a significant amount of what Pierre Bourdieu calls cultural capital. Cultural capital comes in various forms such as education, manners, and material goods. While its economic value is not often immediately recognizable, possessing cultural capital most likely leads to symbolic profit and financial gain.[19] The three men inherited cultural capital from their families and relatives in the forms of their taste in art and architecture and the environment in which they could pursue their education in these areas.

---

[17] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 26.
[18] "A Conversation with Yamasaki," *Architectural Forum* 111, no. 1 (July 1959): 118.
[19] Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. John G. Richardson (New York: Greenwood, 1986), 241–258.

When the primary reason for the majority of the Nisei to get higher education was to increase the chance of obtaining a better paying and stable job, the three men's sociocultural circumstances allowed them to dream of becoming artists or architects. The three men all had at least one writer or architect in their families or relatives who showed them examples of being successful in the fields of cultural production and supported their unconventional career choices. While their families were not rich, their cultural capital enabled them to take career paths that were strikingly different from many of their generation.

The three Nisei's privilege as men also helped them embark on their professional endeavors. Evelyn Nakano Glenn points out that many of the older Nisei women "remained captive in the pre-industrial sector" in contrast to their male counterparts who had more job options.[20] The early twentieth-century gender norms assigned most household work, such as childcare, cooking, and cleaning, to women. Thus, women were forced to choose jobs in domestic service, which allowed them to work flexible hours while prioritizing their housewifery role at home. In the post-World War II period, different career options became available for women. Christine R. Yano examines young and educated Nisei women who ventured into a professional career as stewardesses. This occupation gave them more mobility and financial independence compared to domestic service.[21] However, they were still subjected to the expectations of stereotypical Asian femininity—loyal, humble, and capable of creating a homey atmosphere.[22] Thus, even women in professional jobs had to deal with patriarchy both at home

[20] Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986), 95.
[21] Christine R. Yano, *Airborne Dreams: "Nisei" Stewardesses and Pan American World Airways* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.
[22] Ibid., 25–30.

and work. The Nisei men were not expected to be the guardian of the home and could enjoy mobility and entertain wider personal possibilities for enhancing their cultural capital.

Their privileged status in comparison to other Nisei has hindered close analytical studies of the three Nisei cultural producers in the context of postwar Japanese American experience, but their unique backgrounds and works have attracted varying degrees of attention from both popular and academic writers. Noguchi, in particular, has been researched extensively by historians because of his unique experience as a mixed-race artist and his wide popularity in the fields of sculpture, landscaping, and furniture design. The last quarter century has seen the emergence of in-depth research on Noguchi's life and work in the United States and Japan. Dore Ashton examines the wide range of Noguchi's oeuvre from an art critic's point of view and argues that his journeys to various places in the course of his work comprised part of his search for a self.[23] Masayo Duus thoroughly investigates the events and individuals that influenced the artist's life and production. In particular, her contribution to research on Noguchi's self-incarceration is noteworthy for its uses of materials, ranging from WRA records to personal letters, and vividly illustrates his controversial role in the camp.[24]

As much as their works have laid the critical groundwork for later scholarship to be built on, we are also left with issues that require further discussion about Noguchi's life and artistic contribution. The authors rely on what Bert Winther-Tamaki calls "East-West rhetoric" and the essentialistic binaries of race as well as culture according to the presumed East-West distinction.[25] Ashton mentions, "The life that he lived in the world was shadowed, Noguchi felt, by the duality of his origins. . . . One possible profile of his life—a bare line drawing that can

[23] Dore Ashton, *Noguchi East and West* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 18.
[24] Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, esp. chapters five and six.
[25] Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 10.

offer only a limited perspective—is that he was born in America where, half-Japanese, he was part alien."[26] Ashton's work is based on the assumption that Noguchi's duality and his non-belongingness in the United States stemmed from his non-whiteness, which drove him to search for the hallucinatory other half of his identity in his fatherland. Duus shares a similar understanding that Noguchi's parents' two cultures and races, and the duality therewith, were at the basis of who he was. Duus mentions that in the postwar period, Noguchi "embodied in his person the friendship newly constructed between Japan and the United States. Even though he had 'blue eyes,' Japanese blood ran in his veins."[27] In Ashton's and Duus's discussions, the "United States vs. Japan" and "white vs. Japanese" binaries are naturalized and each entity is imagined as a fixed category.

I should point out here that these authors' readings of Noguchi's identity are reasonable to a certain extent because Noguchi himself tended to use East-West rhetoric at times when he thought he needed to buttress his uniqueness as an artist to appeal to a wider audience. In particular, his autobiography was dotted with romanticized expressions about the contrast between the United States and Japan. For example, he wrote:

> I was always struck by the contrasts of America, Japan, and the rest of the world; the difference in materiality, or should one say, the concepts of reality, which is not just a question of place but of the modern versus the old world—the permanent reality of the past and the fluid reality of the present. I found myself a stranger.[28]

[26] Ashton, *Noguchi East and West*, 11–12.
[27] Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 210. "Blue eyes" is a description that the Japanese have commonly given to a European or Euro-American person to denote their whiteness, regardless of the actual color of their eyes.
[28] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 35.

This example epitomizes how he engaged in shaping the polarized ideas of the United States as a dynamic and modern entity and Japan as a static and old entity. His purpose of this conceptualization was to highlight the significance of his transcending the borders of East and West and harmonizing the two seemingly incompatible entities. One of the objectives of my dissertation is to show how Noguchi formulated his own version of discourse on East and West and constructed his understanding about Japaneseness and Americanness.

Art historians Bert Winther-Tamaki and Amy Lyford explore what lies beyond Noguchi's East-West metaphor and provide a more nuanced discussion of his identity. Winther-Tamaki examines how "Noguchi's personal sense of affiliation was conflicted and shifted with some frequency during his career; at times it was closer to Japan, at times America, and sometimes elsewhere."[29] He argues that Noguchi circumvented artistic nationalism, the force that tried to align his work with a particular national category, and imagined both of his parents' nations as home.[30] While Winther-Tamaki is centrally concerned about how Noguchi found ways to escape from American and Japanese national art discourses that attempted to subsume him and his work under their respective domains, I pay attention to how he negotiated his various identities where even notions about nation became fluid. Rather than how he circumvented nationalism, I show how he confronted and bargained with it.

Lyford builds on Winther-Tamaki's work and points out the problem of critics and scholars rarely venturing beyond discussing Noguchi's bicultural identity as a catch-all explanation for his artistic practice.[31] Focusing on the period between 1930 and 1950, Lyford examines "the shifting cultural and political context in which Noguchi developed as an activist

[29] Winther-Tamaki, *Art*, 114.
[30] Ibid., 110.
[31] Amy Lyford, *Isamu Noguchi's Modernism: Negotiating Race, Labor, and Nation, 1930–1950* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 6.

and a socially engaged American artist," while criticizing the field of modern American art that "continues to aestheticize Noguchi's race as an unchanging concept."[32] Lyford argues, "The persistent racial stereotyping—even when critics caught up in the stereotypes praised the Japanese aesthetic qualities in his work—forced him to negotiate competing interests and cultural positions and to reinvent himself continually, as an artist and a cultural actor in postwar American life."[33] My dissertation is also based on this understanding and delves into how Noguchi continuously redeployed his identities for his best interests in both domestic and international contexts against a backdrop of the Cold War.

Nakashima's and Yamasaki's lives and works are only sporadically documented compared to Noguchi's. It was not until the twenty-first century that a few writers published book-length works that discuss their lives in detail. As for Nakashima, a 2003 biography written by his daughter Mira Nakashima remains to be the most thorough account of the woodworker's oeuvre and artistic philosophy except for his own 1981 autobiography.[34] And for Yamasaki, Winther-Tamaki's article and Makiko Iizuka's biography are the most recent and detailed accounts of the architect's aesthetics and personal life except for his own 1979 autobiography.[35]

---

[32] Ibid., 7.
[33] Ibid., 121.
[34] Mira Nakashima, *Nature, Form, & Spirit: The Life and Legacy of George Nakashima* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003), 211; Nakashima, *The Soul*.
[35] Bert Winther-Tamaki, "Minoru Yamasaki: Contradictions of Scale in the Career of the Nisei Architect of the World's Largest Building," *Amerasia Journal* 20, no. 3 (2000): 163–188; Makiko Iizuka, *9.11 no hyoteki o tsukutta otoko: tensai to sabetsu: kenchikuka Minoru Yamasaki no shogai* [*The man who created the target of 9.11: genius and discrimination: the life of architect Minoru Yamasaki*] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 2010); Yamasaki, *A Life in Architecture*. There are great works that focus on New York's World Trade Center that Yamasaki designed, including Eric Darton, *Divided We Stand: A Biography of New York's World Trade Center* (New York: Basic Books, 1999); Angus Kress Gillespie, *Twin Towers: The Life of New York City's World Trade Center* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999); James Glanz and Eric Lipton, *City in the Sky: The Rise and Fall of the World Trade Center* (New York: Times Books, 2003).

While these works shed light on their private lives and family relations that influenced their life decisions as well as the challenges they faced as Japanese American cultural producers, they fall short of revealing how flexibly they negotiated their identities in establishing their successful careers.

I propose that studying Noguchi's, Nakashima's, and Yamasaki's flexible deployments of their racial, ethnic, cultural, and national identities provides a way to understand the workings of "Cold War Orientalism" within and outside American society, and how individuals pushed back against it. Expanding on Edward W. Said's prominent work *Orientalism*, Christina Klein argues that the American formation of a benevolent attitude toward Asian cultures and peoples became an important part of constructing the "Cold War Consensus." The shared understanding of the importance of cultivating sympathy toward Asian Others aided Americans to move away from an isolationist tradition and ultimately establish a solid U.S.-Asia alliance in their fight against the Soviet Union.[36] Klein uses the phrase "Cold War Orientalism" to explain the American public's paternalistic desire to protect the noncommunist cultures and peoples of Asia and emphasizes the critical role it played in constructing America's postwar identity as an advocate of the free world in its ascent to global power. While Said specifically discusses the Orientalizing and Othering of the East (Middle East) by the West (Europe), Klein and other scholars including Lisa Lowe, Melani McAlister, and Mari Yoshihara demonstrate how the concepts of "East" and "West" that have been shaped in academic and popular discourses are actually more heterogeneous, uneven, and porous than the regional entities whose boundaries Said reinforces in

[36] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978); Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

order to explain the polarization between the two.[37] The scholars point out the limitations of the clear-cut definitions of "the Orient" and "the Occident" and propose that we pay attention to the intentionally maintained porousness of the assumed boundaries between "us" and "them" for ideological purposes. For example, Klein argues that Orientalism worked to both Other *and* subsume Asia and its peoples under Cold War U.S. hegemony. Building on this argument, I show how the American media not only stereotypically Orientalized the Nisei cultural producers but also represented them as important part of America's cultural diversity. In addition, I demonstrate how Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki resisted or bargained with the forces that tried to keep them Othered and contained. My research intends to shed light on how individuals exerted agency in dealing with the regime of Cold War Orientalism.

The function of Cold War Orientalism was the key not only to constructing a postwar new world order with the United States topping the hierarchy but also to containing domestic voices calling for the state's initiative in rectifying American society's structural racism and inequality. This was a time when world media outlets exposed the contradiction between the American freedom, democracy, and equality touted around the world and the domestic racism epitomized in the segregation of African Americans and the incarceration of Japanese Americans. The necessity to showcase faith in equality in order to claim leadership in the postwar world, where decolonization movements spread, urged the United States to accept racial liberalism, which stood on the belief that it was possible to socially assimilate racial minorities into the mainstream.

---

[37] Lisa Lowe, *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Mari Yoshihara, *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

The rise of the Japanese American model minority narrative was contingent on the need for the United States to deny the charges of racism being tolerated in its society and prove otherwise. In the early 1950s, as judicial forms of discrimination that had hindered Japanese immigrants' naturalization and property rights were gradually abolished, the social standing of Japanese Americans started to improve. At the same time, many Americans of Japanese ancestry received higher education, and as a result, the American media featured them and publicized that they were successfully climbing the American social ladder. On August 13, 1956, the *New York Times* published an article titled "Japanese in U.S. Gaining Equality." A staff writer Gladwin Hill reported that Japanese Americans "have moved into status close to first class citizenship," and that it was a result of "the largely exemplary, and often heroic, deportment of the Japanese Americans themselves in the relocation centers and the Armed Force." In Hill's account, the forced relocation and Nisei's dedication to the 442nd (mistyped as 441st) Regimental Combat Team were translated as courageous and self-sacrificial acts on the part of the racialized group of people, which ultimately won them respect from the rest of American society and enabled them to integrate into it. The article also noted the Nisei's active participation in the American political arena. It reported that Washington JACL Representative Mike Masaoka, "one of the capitol's most energetic lobbyists," was leading "the successful JACL legislative program that brought among other things naturalization privileges to the Issei and the payment of evacuation claims for property losses."[38] This report set forth the understanding that Japanese Americans adapted themselves well to the processes of American politics, without criticizing or revolting against the government's wrongdoings during the war. Based on their civil conduct that was in accordance with the goals and rules of American society, the article suggested, they were now regarded as

[38] Gladwin Hill, "Japanese in U.S. Gaining Equality: Housing Is Only Conspicuous Barrier Remaining and It Is Expected to Fall," *New York Times*, August 12, 1956.

full-fledged American citizens. The narrative of the smooth adaptation and acculturation of Japanese Americans into mainstream American society left unanswered the issues of the internal divide and the marginalization of minority groups such as no-no boys within Japanese American communities.

What crystallized the Japanese American image as "the Horatio Alger hero" was University of California, Berkeley sociologist William Petersen's 1966 article for the *New York Times Magazine* titled, "Success Story, Japanese-American Style."[39] Petersen contrasted the "almost totally unaided effort" of Japanese Americans in successfully advancing their status with the predicament of African Americans for whom "all the well-meaning programs and countless scholarly studies" barely succeeded in repairing "the damage that the slave traders started." According to Scott Kurashige, Petersen "based his praise of Japanese American acculturation and social mobility on an implicit comparison to the predicament of urban blacks in the wake of the Watts riots."[40] Petersen reinforced the widely held assumption that "individual deficiencies rather than structural economic and racial barriers were at the root of urban joblessness and poverty," which worked to direct the criticism away from the state and cast the blame on the very victims of the state's mismanagement of these issues.[41]

As scholars such as Kurashige and Ellen D. Wu point out, the model minority narrative served two noteworthy purposes for representing the United States as an inclusive society, into which Japanese Americans were to be incorporated. First, it functioned to dilute the shock of the incarceration by emphasizing Nisei's loyalty and their successful entry into the middle class. It

---

[39] William Petersen, "Success Story, Japanese-American Style," *New York Times Magazine* (January 9, 1966): 21.
[40] Scott Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 186.
[41] Thomas Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 156.

helped tout the idea that anyone could become a proud member of white-majority U.S. society as long as they shared unwavering patriotism and faith in the Protestant work ethic. The JACL reinforced the narrative by linking "Japanese American mobility to cultural characteristics, especially Issei's child-rearing practices and their emphasis on educational attainment."[42] Resonating with the 1956 *New York Times* article, WRA director Dillon S. Myer argued, "the status of Japanese Americans improved not *in spite of* their having been interned but *because of* their internment."[43] He reinterpreted this negative piece of U.S. history as a positive story about assimilation and upward mobility. Second, the model minority narrative presented itself as a useful tool for advocates of color-blind meritocracy to blame the victims of structural racism and inequality in American society. Blacks and Latinos, who lagged behind Nisei in terms of their economic mobility, often became targets of the attack, which obscured the fact that they did not have the educational opportunities that Nisei had.[44]

The existing body of scholarship convincingly demonstrates how white state officials and JACLers took part in shaping and disseminating the model minority discourse. While it is important to examine the ways in which the state and powerful institutions largely preconditioned how Nisei's experiences in the postwar period would be represented in the mainstream media, it is equally crucial to examine how individual Nisei responded to the media discourses that were often saturated by stereotypical images about them. Taking the examples of Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki, my research shows how at an individual level Nisei engaged with the model minority image. I demonstrate how actively they built their self-images

---

[42] Ellen D. Wu, *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014), 162.
[43] Quoted in Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race*, 192, emphasis original.
[44] Jere Takahashi, *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997), 121.

through defining their own backgrounds and creative philosophies in their speeches and interviews. They strategically deployed certain parts of their identities that would serve them best in the particular circumstances in which they found themselves. This indicates the fluidity of their racial, ethnic, cultural, and national identities that could not be encompassed in the obedient and passive model minority image. By examining the cultural producers' active participation in shaping the discourses surrounding them, I draw attention to their agency in influencing, to a certain extent, the ways in which they were represented.

The cultural producers also carefully coped with their clients' assumptions about who they were and what they produced. Being Americans of Japanese descent occasionally gave them an extra task of dealing with the expectation that their works reflected Japanese authenticity. Nineteenth-century Japonisme, which swept Euro-American elite societies after the 1867 Paris World's Fair, cultivated a taste for Japanese aesthetics and cultural commodities. Twentieth-century primitivism, an artistic style shaped by such artists as Pablo Picasso and Paul Gauguin, who received inspiration from non-European artistic expressions that Westerners deemed "primitive," also laid the groundwork for Japanese art to be desired and consumed extensively. In the postwar era, the redevelopment of amicable U.S.-Japan relations promoted the American public's interest in Japanese art and culture, best exemplified in the Zen boom. The Beat Generation, a group of young writers, artists, and musicians who rejected the American culture of consumer capitalism, embraced Zen Buddhism as a guiding light for their alternative ways of life. The group's most influential figures—Alan Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, and Jack Kerouac—all became infatuated with Zen master D. T. Suzuki's books and lectures.[45] The popularity of Zen and traditional Japanese culture provided the context in which the Nisei were occasionally

[45] James William Coleman, *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 61–62.

encouraged to create an authentically "Japanese" product that somehow reflected values overlooked by Western civilization. They variously sought ways to take advantage of the Japan craze and also customize the notion of "authenticity" for the sake of their own career developments; they suggested that their works, which embodied their interpretations—not copies—of some aspects and values of Japanese aesthetics, were authentic in their own right. In doing so, the Nisei cultural producers contributed to the creation of a new American profile that emphasized cultural diversity.

**Sources**

In order to carefully trace Noguchi's, Nakashima's, and Yamasaki's activities and representations, I take advantage of the ample resources that are available in the forms of magazine and newspaper articles, project summaries, personal correspondences, autobiographies, and biographies. The unpublished materials that I obtained in my archival research at the Isamu Noguchi Foundation and Garden Museum in Long Island City, New York, the James A. Michener Art Museum in Doylestown, Pennsylvania, the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs at the Walter P. Reuther Library at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, and the Archives of American Art at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C., in addition to published writings about the cultural producers, form the basis of my discussion.

Investigating Noguchi's life and work required archival research in Japan, where he exerted enormous influence in the early postwar period. Noguchi's involvement in designing the interior of Shin-Banraisha, a faculty-student hall at Keio University in Tokyo, left interesting materials that have not been fully explored. Making use of Noguchi's own writings as well as

writings on him and his works that I collected at the Keio University Art Center's Noguchi Room Archives and the National Diet Library enables me to illustrate the side of Noguchi that does not usually appear in accounts that focus on his life in the United States. I devote chapter 4 entirely to examining the artist's experience in U.S.-occupied Japan to demonstrate how he negotiated his identities in his fatherland.

**Chapter Outline**

The following four chapters discuss textual and visual representations of Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki in various media and how they engaged in the processes of shaping and modifying them. Through this examination, I show that the Nisei men flexibly deployed their identities, being both subjects and agents of the discursive force of Cold War Orientalism.

In chapter 1, I discuss the three men's American media representations as successful Japanese American men. Their respected careers were woven into a Japanese American version of the popular American dream narrative that while they suffered from prewar anti-Japanese American discrimination and wartime incarceration, their endurance, diligence, and entrepreneurship—which exemplified ideals of the Protestant work ethic—helped them become successful in competitive American society. That they quickly rose to fame despite the adversities gave rise to their image as model minorities. They were each awarded the Nisei of the Biennium Award (Yamasaki in 1962; Nakashima in 1980; and Noguchi in 1984) by the JACL, which indicates that generations of community leaders identified with these three men's successes and claimed their stories as part of their own. The JACL both reinforced the three men's place in its version of Japanese American history and endorsed the model minority narrative. On the one hand, the three men generally embraced the ideologies of meritocracy,

individualism, and democracy, which were important elements of the model minority discourse. On the other hand, they pointed out faults in the rosy picture of American society. The latter undertaking, though, came later in their careers and had only a limited effect on model minority representations of them already in the media. Nonetheless, the fact that they openly criticized American race issues shows how they chose to take defiant attitudes toward being passively represented as perpetually foreign and obedient to the status quo.

In chapter 2, I examine the three men's strategic positioning of themselves as cultural producers who could enhance the non-material dimension of American culture and contribute to promoting the virtues of cultural diversity. Being Americans of Japanese ancestry worked to their advantage in the context of the popularity of things Japanese in the post-World War II period, but at the same time it made them and their works vulnerable to an Orientalizing lens. They were often expected to provide "authentic" Japanese designs. The Nisei carefully promoted the understanding that their works were a combination of their imaginative interpretations of ideas from Japan and their workmanship based on Euro-American education and training. They claimed that this fusion of concepts and methods resulted in a truly second-generation American creation rather than an obsolete eclecticism. Thus, they defied the discursive power that attempted to Other them and their works as foreign.

Chapter 3 shifts attention to the international context and looks at Yamasaki's and Noguchi's roles as cultural ambassadors. In the 1950s, Yamasaki designed a new U.S. consulate building in Kobe, and Noguchi created the Japanese garden for the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. The Nisei combined Japanese visual elements with modernist aesthetics in their works to signal their capability to translate between the East and the West. As they worked on these overseas projects, they actively sought inspiration from different cultures and grasped

opportunities to expand their horizons. The experiences led them to reflect on the Eurocentric practices and views of the American architectural and art worlds, and they began to occasionally challenge the dominant cultural paradigm of their fields from within. Thus, the Nisei both took advantage of their image as the bridge between the East and the West and defied working merely as instruments of Cold War Orientalism, of which their ambassadorial projects were part.

Chapter 4 is dedicated to examining the discourse on Noguchi's Japaneseness in the Japanese art world and media during the U.S. Occupation (1945–1952). As I stated above, the existence of rich materials on Noguchi's activities in Japan enables an extensive discussion on various interactions he had with Japanese avant-gardists and innovative architects and designers. Amidst intensive Westernization, Noguchi played an interesting role in Japan; he showcased how cultures of East and West could coexist and supplement each other. His Japanese friends saw him as a perfect aid in their endeavor to explore novel ideas and expressions that were uniquely Japanese and would also appeal to Western audiences. In this context, Noguchi functioned as both an insider and outsider of the Japanese art world; Japanese cultural producers claimed his "Japaneseness" based on his "blood" inherited from his father, while at times pointing out his foreignness because of his "Americanness" inherited and developed through his life and work in his mother's country. His experience demonstrates that Cold War Orientalism was not an unmitigated discourse. The Japanese often pushed back against American cultural hegemony and claimed their heritage's uniqueness that could not be wholly contained or comprehended by the Americans. Noguchi in turn actively took advantage of his insider and outsider status to receive inspiration from his fellow Japanese cultural producers and translate it into his works in the United States and abroad.

In summary, this dissertation looks at the Nisei cultural producers' media portrayals and their agency in negotiating their representations. What is revealed through this study is how the same individuals at times functioned to reinforce Cold War Orientalism and other times worked against it, thus defying the agent/subject binary of power relations.

## Chapter 1
## "Successful" Nisei: Politics of Representation and the Cold War American Way of Life

Architect Minoru Yamasaki, woodworker George Nakashima, and sculptor Isamu Noguchi were among the most famous Nisei artists/architects whose influence transcended national borders. The American media celebrated the fact that the three men, in spite of having been victims of racial prejudice earlier in their lives, not only successfully climbed their ways up in the competitive worlds of art and architecture but also demonstrated that non-whites could play vital roles in representing the virtues of the American way of life. Their careers reached a high point during the 1950s and 1960s when the United States was extending its power and dominance in postwar international politics—the move that drew criticism from various parties working for decolonization and antiracism around the world. The image of the Japanese Americans being successful in the white-dominated American art and architectural fields—the fields that were often associated with freedom of expression and democracy—served the United States greatly in creating a self-image of a racially tolerant and culturally diverse society. The incorporation of the Nisei's success stories into the contested narrative about America—where different races, genders, classes, and other culturally defined groups supposedly enjoy the fruits of liberal democracy—formed an important aspect of the discourse of the American way of life disseminated within as well as outside the United States.

One commonality linked the three men's media representations; their works and private lives were associated with important elements of the American way of life such as meritocracy, individualism, and Cold War era's ideals of the home and gender. While Yamasaki, Nakashima, and Noguchi generally embraced these ideologies, there were times when they pointed out faults in the rosy picture of American society. Examining media representations of the three Nisei's lives and careers within the Cold War framework unveils the workings of the institutional power

that sought to weave a teleological story about benevolent assimilation and of the cultural producers' individual agency that tried to disrupt that attempt.

**Politics of Representation**

During the Cold War, the "American way of life" became one of the most important ideological weapons for U.S. cold warriors. They defined the "American way of life" against what they considered the communist way of life to be.[1] In his 1947 speech, President Harry S. Truman contended that "one way of life" championed free institutions, democratic government, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression, whereas "the second way of life" was based on a coercive and oppressive political system, control over the ways of expression, and deprivation of personal freedom.[2] Truman claimed America to be the leader of the former way of life, stressing the values of liberal tradition and individual autonomy.

While Truman and his administration insisted that they ensured the better way of life for their citizens and allies, the international community and domestic minority groups gave them a dubious look. Intensifying African American struggle against persistent domestic racism, happening in tandem with the surge of anti-imperialism around the world, threatened to deny the country's credibility as a world leader. However, as Laura A. Belmonte points out, U.S. officials did not necessarily try to conceal the problems of their society. Instead, by providing information

[1] Laura A. Belmonte, *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 6.
[2] Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine," March 12, 1947, Harry S. Truman Papers, *Harry S. Truman Library and Museum*, accessed January 28, 2017, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/pdfs/5-9.pdf.

about domestic issues such as racism and showcasing how Americans coped with and tried to solve them, "they crafted a national narrative of progress, prosperity, and peace."[3]

I argue that the Japanese American experiences of prewar discrimination, wartime incarceration, resettlement, and elevation to the middle-class were also incorporated into the American narrative of righting its historical wrongs. The Japanese American success story fit perfectly into the celebratory national narrative of benevolent assimilation and liberal democracy, which emphasized hard work and self-discipline and understated the factors of race, class, and gender that significantly affected one's chances of achieving the American dream. Japanese Americans' postwar advancement into higher education and professional job markets, despite having been labeled as enemy aliens and incarcerated in the camps during the war, worked discursively to support the idea that any minorities could climb the social ladder if they tried hard enough and that it was their fault if they failed to do so.

As some scholars have noted, the development of the Japanese American model minority narrative and the growing concern over the "Negro problem" derived from the same trend toward sacralizing individualism.[4] In an effort to propose solutions for improving the lives of African Americans, Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan argued in his 1965 report that African American family structure had to be changed. He insisted that the high rate of single-motherhood in impoverished African American homes forced mothers to work, which affected their children mentally and led them to be less educated and more dependent on welfare. While Moynihan's intention was to encourage whites to stop discriminating especially against African American men so that they could be strong breadwinners and terminate the reproduction of poverty, he promoted the understanding that the "pathologic" aspect of African American culture

[3] Belmonte, *Selling the American Way*, 14.
[4] See, for example, Kurashige, *The Shifting Grounds of Race*; Wu, *The Color of Success*.

had to be cured. Moreover, because he did not clearly mention the state's responsibility and negligence in rectifying fundamental inequality and racism, he reinforced the belief that it was ultimately up to the individual's effort whether they could overcome poverty or not.[5]

While Japanese American intellectuals warned against the use of their success stories as a tool for glorifying individualism, their experiences were often incorporated into, and became fundamental parts of, the narrative that championed self-help and effort as the keys to success in American society.[6] The life stories of Yamasaki, Nakashima, and Noguchi likewise became important components of the larger narrative of how Japanese Americans pulled themselves up by their bootstraps. The fact that the three Nisei were privileged to have significant cultural capital and extensive mobility, which facilitated their career developments, was often left out of view. Their stories of rising from humble beginnings served as a justification for the claim that even those who were racialized and discriminated against could win the acceptance of middle-class Americans through their individual effort, however marginal and precarious that acceptance might be.

Media representations of the three Nisei men provide excellent examples for examining how particular individuals' aspects of lifestyles and works were used to highlight the virtues of the American way of life. They became favorite subjects of national magazines such as *Time, Life, House & Home,* and *Architectural Forum*, for which Henry R. Luce, the fervent nationalist who coined the term the "American Century," served as editor-in-chief. During World War II, Luce had remarked, "Americans had to learn to hate Germans, but hating Japs comes natural—as

---

[5] For the controversies on the Moynihan Report, see L. Rainwater and W. Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967).
[6] "Don't Use Japanese as Models for Negros, Enomoto Tells Whites," *New York Nichibei*, January 2, 1969; "Historian Says Japanese Are Becoming 'Instrument of White Racism,'" *New York Nichibei,* January 9, 1969.

natural as fighting Indians once was."[7] Considering his racism against non-whites, the inclusion of the images of the three men and their families in his magazines as representations of the American way of life, which had heretofore been embodied exclusively by white European Americans, indicated a significant shift in global geopolitics as well as in his way of thinking. As Takashi Fujitani argues, Cold War politics required "repositioning Japan and Japanese Americans as global and domestic model minorities" to rationalize American leadership in international relations.[8] Just like how narrating the story about Japan's transformation from a bellicose totalitarian state to a thriving capitalist hub of Asia under the guidance of the Occupation forces allowed the United States to emphasize a positive reason for extending power into Asia, representing the Nisei's lives as American models for success served the media mogul's purpose of extolling benefits of the American way of life to the world.

What was often cropped out of their media representations was the reality that the Nisei men's fame did not actually ensure them the mainstream status and privilege that white middle-class men enjoyed. Their lives were greatly influenced—often negatively—by the fact that they were racial minorities, and they never completely accepted the claim that America's purported egalitarian and individualistic principles guaranteed everyone the same benefits and equal opportunities. Using means outside the purview of the mainstream media, such as autobiographies, they communicated racism's impact on their lives as Nisei and questioned the legitimacy of the democracy that the U.S. government extolled domestically and internationally.

---

[7] Quoted in Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 2.
[8] Takashi Fujitani, *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 236.

## Nisei's Representations of the American Way of Life

### *Minoru Yamasaki*

Minoru Yamasaki was one of the most widely cited Japanese Americans for their success stories. The narrative of him growing up in Seattle's Japanese enclave to become the renowned architect of the World Trade Center in New York in the 1960s was disseminated by the media, which helped promote the understanding that Americans, regardless of their race, enjoyed social mobility. As the Cold War intensified, Yamasaki supported the ideologies of the American freedom and democracy that supposedly enabled his rise from poverty. However, as an examination of his autobiography reveals, he also pointed out that he had to constantly fight against racism in order to protect his status in American society. Thus, he walked a tightrope, balancing his claim for belonging to the American middle class and advocating equal access to freedom and democracy for all, including himself.

Yamasaki was born the first son of a Japanese immigrant couple in Seattle, Washington in 1912. Upon graduating from the University of Washington, he moved to New York and attended New York University, from which he received a master's degree in architecture. After working on various architectural projects in New York throughout the war, Yamasaki accepted an offer to become design chief at a Detroit architectural firm in 1945, anticipating opportunities that the growing city had in store for him. Needing a pleasant living environment for himself and his family, Yamasaki looked for a house in Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, or Grosse Pointe—neighborhoods whose residents were predominantly white upper- and middle-class families—where he had designed some homes. However, the local real estate association's discrimination against non-whites prevented him from owning property in any of these neighborhoods. Consequently, Yamasaki settled in a 125-year-old farmhouse in Troy Township on the outskirts

of Detroit. Even when U.S.-Japan relations improved drastically, white homeowners were reluctant to allow Japanese in their neighborhoods. The presence of non-whites would cause real estate values to drop, and although cultural diversity might have become acceptable to some extent, white ethnocentrism was still very prevalent when it came to protecting their traditional privilege and way of life.

As if trying to shake off his disappointment, Yamasaki concentrated on making the best of the farmhouse. Magazines such as *Architectural Forum* and *House Beautiful* noted Yamasaki's artistry in altering an outmoded farmhouse into a modern abode without distorting the "spirit" of the farmhouse.[9] Both magazines emphasized the contrast between the Yamasaki residence's unique and modern interior and less assertive exterior that blended in with the trees growing around it. The house successfully fitting into the existing way of life symbolized the Yamasakis' adjustment to the white suburban social landscape. Although the house attracted much attention, it was rarely mentioned that the Yamasakis were forced into it because of housing discrimination.

As his house and other buildings he designed became famous, Yamasaki's extraordinary story of lifting himself out of obscurity captured media attention. A 1958 *Architectural Forum* article titled "American Architect Yamasaki" delineated how he grew up in racism-ridden Seattle and later worked at Alaskan salmon canneries—one of the labor intensive jobs that whites avoided and thus were open to racial minorities—during summers in order to finance his college education. The article quoted Yamasaki explaining his inferiority complex as a Japanese working in the white-dominated field of architecture: "I felt that something was missing and that I had to

[9] "Modernized Farm House," *Architectural Forum* 95 (December 1951): 111–113; "One Glass Wall Made an Old House New," *House Beautiful* (February 1952): 80–81.

keep running after it. But look: everyone has a complex. . . mine was—that I was Japanese."[10] Russell Bourne, the author of the article, did not engage with Yamasaki's racial consciousness or the problematic fact that he was made to feel inferior because of his ancestry. Instead, Bourne focused on Yamasaki's transformation from a humble laborer who toiled at salmon canneries in his youth to a confident and accomplished architect who relaxed on the terrace of his handsome house.[11] "Seattle and Yamasaki's days of troubled contention are indeed a long way off," declared Bourne, ignoring Yamasaki's continuous suffering from racism.[12] Bourne emphasized Yamasaki's class-based assimilation, while diminishing his perpetual racial inassimilability. Although Bourne ended the article with an illustration of a happy Yamasaki who was not contentious any more about the past discrimination he faced, the architect did not completely come to terms with his anxiety and struggle. As Yamasaki described himself in the article, he felt the need to try extra hard to catch up with the white men who dominated the architectural field. This attests to the fact that he consciously fought against the stereotypical emasculation of the Japanese American man, which had been effected through the history of exclusion and incarceration. The stereotype never faded away—neither did his struggle.

While the architect's defiance to racism was downplayed, his successful image was reinforced through the portrayals of his attractive wife, Teruko. She played an important role in promoting the understanding that the Yamasaki residence represented an ideal domestic space. The *USIS Feature* reported, "Animated, alert, outgoing, deeply content with her life as mother and housewife, she serves as balance for her husband's intensity and dedicated absorption in his

[10] Russell Bourne, "American Architect Yamasaki," *Architectural Forum* 109, no. 2 (August 1958): 85.
[11] Ibid., 84–85.
[12] Ibid., 168.

profession."[13] Here, the architect's manliness was emphasized by the "intensity" with which he devoted himself to his business and by the contented wife who managed household chores so he could focus on earning a living for the family. At a time when women who had joined the workforce during World War II were urged to move back into home to let men take over their place, the Yamasaki home stood for Cold War American domesticity in which "successful breadwinners and attractive homemakers" played respective gender roles to achieve the wholesomeness of the home.[14]

In a different instance, the Yamasaki family's Americanness was emphasized through a description of their white middle-class suburban lifestyle, which was contrasted with their non-whiteness that inevitably manifested itself in their visual representations. In a *Detroit Free Press* article, writer Pauline Sterling reported that the Yamasaki family led what Teruko called "strictly American" lifestyle, completely assimilated into American culture and society. Sterling informed readers: "To Americans they look Japanese but they're not. They're contemporary American." Featuring Teruko, Sterling reported that the "typical American housewife" and former Julliard student has never been to Japan, "never made a silk screen scroll—doesn't know a thing about growing flowers and doesn't crawl into the woodwork when the man of the house comes home." In the context of the article, Japan was constructed as a land where strong patriarchy prohibited Japanese women from becoming modern and independent, and in turn, America was defined as antithesis to that backwardness. Sterling also stated that "in their wide circle of friends there are no Japanese-Americans," masking the fact that Yamasaki had been involved in Japanese

---

[13] *USIS Feature* (undated, circa 1960), Minoru Yamasaki Papers, box 1, folder 12, Walter P. Reuther Library, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan (hereafter referred to as MYP).
[14] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 21.

American organizations during World War II and was a Detroit Japanese American Citizens League chapter member.[15] In the article, the Yamasakis' success in American society was linked with their presumed distance from and indifference to Japanese and Japanese American people. Even though Japanese-themed architecture found a way into Detroit's white suburbs, they shut the door to potential migrants of different races. Precluding the anxiety that the Yamasakis anticipated an unwelcome group of resettlers that might come in the future, Sterling assured its audience that the Japanese American family was thoroughly Americanized and that they hardly exhibited any ties with the ethnic community. Sterling suggested that the Yamasakis' disengagement from their ethnic peers as well as their demonstration of the then dominant Victorian ideals of domesticity and gender roles enabled them to acculturate into the white middle class.

The overwhelmingly favorable media portrayals of the couple did not ensure their real-life happiness. Increased media attention brought more work to the architect, and he spent less and less time with Teruko. They fell out with each other and got a divorce in 1961. While Minoru married two other women after he parted from Teruko, she did not commit herself to a long-term relationship with other men. She started teaching piano, and the number of students soon grew to fifty. When Minoru and Teruko remarried in 1969, Teruko cut down on her work as a piano teacher in order to prioritize her role at home, which Minoru had requested in their first marriage. *Detroit News* writer Eleanor Breitmeyer portrayed Teruko as a faithful and devoted housewife who tolerated her husband's caprice despite the fact that she was a talented pianist and could choose another life course without being subservient to her husband. Remarrying Minoru, Teruko was reported to have declared, "I will try to be more of a Japanese

[15] Pauline Sterling, "Mrs. Yamasaki…: A Modern Design," *Detroit Free Press*, September 20, 1959, MYP, box 31, scrapbook 2.

wife."[16] Her words suggested that a woman who is too independent and modern could topple the balance and order of the home and that traditional Japanese femininity might be helpful in building a good relationship with the husband. Teruko's understanding of Japanese femininity paralleled the ways in which contemporary filmic narratives portrayed the Japanese woman. Gina Marchetti argues that films such as *Japanese War Bride* (1952) and *Bridge to the Sun* (1961) produced "the myth of the subservient Japanese woman to shore up a threatened masculinity in light of American women's growing independence during World War II."[17] Teruko's comment similarly discredited the contemporary feminism that sought to improve the social status of women. In contrast to how Teruko evoked her potential Japaneseness and femininity as a key to be a better wife, Minoru, who declared that he was "just going to be nicer to her," implicitly distinguished himself from stereotypical Japanese male chauvinism and thereby emphasized his Americanness and gentle manliness.[18]

The two female Detroit writers, Sterling and Breitmeyer, emphasized Teruko's Americanness and Japaneseness during her first and second marriages respectively. While the two descriptions might have seemed to present opposing elements of Teruko's characteristics, they both spoke of Teruko's model minority womanhood. The "American" Teruko in Sterling's article exemplified a model minority attitude toward acculturation, whereas the "Japanese" Teruko suggested her ability to make use of her ethnic knowledge (in terms of how to sustain a marriage) to realize a stable middle-class family life. The writers, who were part of the generation that saw more women holding jobs while playing the gender role assigned to them at

---

[16] Eleanor Breitmeyer, "Social Scene: Yamasaki, First Wife Remarried," *Detroit News*, July 31, 1969, MYP, box 2, folder 4.
[17] Gina Marchetti, *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 158.
[18] Breitmeyer, "Social Scene."

home, both admired and exoticized Teruko, an attractive Japanese American woman who abandoned her career and chose to be a perfect housewife.

While Teruko's story appeared only in local newspapers, her husband's made it into *Time* magazine when he received a commission to design the World Trade Center in 1962. The January 18, 1963 issue of the magazine featured Yamasaki on the cover and reported extensively about his life and architectural projects in an article titled "The Road to Xanadu." The author of the article described the anti-Japanese discrimination that affected Yamasaki and other Nisei Seattleites before and during World War II, but quickly assured its audience that "there was little bitterness among the Japanese-Americans."[19] The author buttressed the claim by quoting Yamasaki's own comment: "A word that I heard over and over again whenever there would be an incident or a slight was *shikataganai*, which means 'it can't be helped.'"[20] Foregrounding endurance and keeping the issue of discrimination in the background, the article emphasized Yamasaki's model minority characteristics and promoted the understanding that patience, rather than vocal resistance, was the way to success. Implicit in this kind of narrative was, as Ellen D. Wu points out, "the demand that racial minorities cooperate with rather than oppose the state's handling of race relations," which was directed especially at African Americans who mounted sharp criticism against the government.[21]

The article's treatment of Yamasaki's experience in housing discrimination reflected the author's careful choice of words in dealing with the controversial issue of racial restrictive covenants, which were facing fierce challenges from African Americans and Asian Americans

[19] "The Road to Xanadu," *Time* (January 18, 1963): 61.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Wu, *The Color of Success*, 161.

among others.[22] The article used a euphemistic language in narrating the incident that Yamasaki encountered:

> A few years ago, when his income had begun to swell, Yamasaki started looking for a larger house for his family, in either Birmingham or Grosse Pointe. But he soon found that even though he is one of Detroit's most famous citizens, he is also a Nisei and therefore still partly an outsider. His real estate broker told him, "I can't get you a house in either suburb, Yama [Yamasaki's nickname]. But I know of a fine old farmhouse in Troy which you can have." Yamasaki liked the 136-year old farmhouse, and he lives there to this day.[23]

The author circumvented the issue of Yamasaki's exclusion from the white upper- and middle-class residential areas and went on to describe how Yamasaki made the old farmhouse into a serene space with Japanese-style gardens. Rather than delving into the problematic incident, the author painted a picture of a satisfied Japanese American man who lived in the old farmhouse that he "liked" and never complained about the unjust treatment or challenged the status quo. An implied lesson to be learned here was that knowing his place in society and accepting the established rules were sometimes necessary for an "outsider"—someone who is not considered as a mainstream American—to live a peaceful life. Even if the architect demonstrated his adherence to the class and gender ideals of the mainstream, he was perpetually "foreign" because of his race.

At the time of the publication of the *Time* article, Yamasaki was married with Peggy Watty from his firm (this was between his first and second marriages with Teruko). The article

---

[22] Cindy I-Fen Cheng, *Citizens of Asian America: Democracy and Race during the Cold War* (New York: New York University Press, 2013); Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis*.
[23] "The Road to Xanadu," 64.

featured a photograph in which the new "blonde" wife tested water in a Japanese-style bathtub.[24] The image of a white woman kneeling down to work on a "Japanese" house chore served to reinforce Yamasaki's image as a successful architect, since it sent the message that Yamasaki's economic achievement earned him a blonde wife who was happy to play the Japanese woman's gender role, which she would never have had to if she had been married to a white man. Yamasaki's marriage with this wife did not last long, but the image of Yamasaki's success remained.

The year after his appearance on the cover of *Time* magazine, Yamasaki, along with Pearl S. Buck and eight other prominent Americans, received the 18th annual Horatio Alger Award from the American Schools and Colleges Association. Over three thousand educators in colleges and universities throughout the country cast their ballots to choose the winners who "rose to success under the traditional free enterprise system" by taking advantage of the "equal opportunity that enable a youth to overcome humble beginnings and achieve success through work and determinism."[25] The dedication of the award to Yamasaki indicated that his life story of rising from poverty to prosperity epitomized the American dream. As he gained prominence as the first Japanese American man of great influence in the American architectural world, Yamasaki became an icon of racial equality and meritocracy.

While Yamasaki established his fame as a Japanese American Horatio Alger, he did not completely buy into the claim that democracy was uniformly achieved for all Americans. His own memoir on constantly fighting against racism served as the best example that demonstrated his understanding that racial minorities were continually exposed to unjust treatments in the

---

[24] Ibid.
[25] "Architect Yamasaki Wins '64 Horatio Alger Award," *Detroit News*, April 17, 1964, MYP, box 31, scrapbook 2; "Horatio Alger Awards Go to Autry, Thornton," *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1964.

United States. A large portion of his 1979 autobiography was dedicated to explaining what the young Yamasaki had to go through. His biographical sketch started with his humble beginning and bitter memories of his childhood; as a Nisei boy, he was rejected at the gates of public pools and mistreated at theaters. Racism haunted him after he left Seattle for New York and escalated when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Yamasaki "was very carefully checked by the FBI, the Navy, and the Army" as his main job at that time happened to be designing defense facilities of the Sampson Naval Station in Geneva, New York.[26] He realized that even though New York was more "cosmopolitan" than Seattle, racial prejudice was not nonexistent. He listed the incidents he encountered while living in New York: a woman suspected that he was a spy and reported to a policeman; a guard at a security station would not let him pass through because he was Japanese; he was bluntly refused to rent one of the apartments which he had designed. One of the most unpleasant experiences occurred on the subway:

> One evening a man said to me, "What are you, Chinese or Jap?" I told him it was none of his business, whereupon he grabbed my collar and pulled out a badge of some sort. I said to him, "Take your hands off me, I'm an American citizen." He let go and ran off the train at the next stop.[27]

This happened at the time when *Time* and *Life* magazines published articles on "How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs."[28] As Wu mentions, "The wartime rivalry between the United States and Japan along with the concurrent US-China alliance thus obliged the state's and society's divergent treatment of Japanese and Chinese Americans."[29] When the American public was

---

[26] Minoru Yamasaki, *A Life in Architecture*, 19–20.
[27] Ibid.
[28] "How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs," *Time* (December 22, 1941): 33; "How to Tell Japs from the Chinese," *Life* (December 22, 1941): 81–82.
[29] Wu, *The Color of Success*, 12.

inculcated with essentialized notions about ethnicity, there was not much one could do to counteract the discursive power of Othering besides asserting his/her American citizenship.

All these instances of prejudice led him to declare: "I am a firm believer that all people, whatever their color, race, or creed, should be recognized for their character and for their contributions to society."[30] In magazines such as *Time* and *Architectural Forum*, whose main audiences were white Americans, his encounter with racism was turned into an anecdote for his success story. When the United States eagerly advocated its democracy to the world, a Japanese American man's suffering of racism was not a savory topic that would attract a wide range of readers. Yamasaki therefore did not have an opportunity to discuss his negative experiences as much as he might have wanted to at the height of the United States' Cold War propaganda. In 1979, at the last stage of his life and career, Yamasaki was finally able to write an autobiography and use it as a space to delineate his firsthand experiences as a victim of blunt racism and his belief in a more egalitarian and multicultural United States.

***George Nakashima***

"Today, in a world of mechanization that separates man's home from his work place, Nakashima is admired not only for his unsurpassed craftsmanship, but also for his independent way of life."[31] George Nakashima was thus described in a 1959 *Look* magazine article. He "was portrayed in the press as a heroic spirit emerging from the ashes of an internment camp" and "as a powerfully creative genius, quietly working alone in his workshop," which emphasized his

[30] Yamasaki, *A Life in Architecture*, 11.
[31] John Peter, "Nakashima and Son," *Look* (April 1959): 70, George Nakashima Papers, 1950–1991 magazine clippings, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. (hereafter referred to as GNPDC).

individualism, diligence, and creativity—important elements for success in the capitalist world.[32] The narrative about Nakashima's successful transformation from a detainee, who was lumped together with potential subversives, to a model citizen and father, who ensured well-being of his family in a white community, functioned to restore his masculinity. It also became an important component of the image of the United States as a democratic state that guaranteed a good life to its loyal subjects. However, Nakashima did not conform to this smooth story of redemptive democracy as a signifier of the country's tolerance for difference. Nakashima was critical of the state's decision to incarcerate a group of people based solely on their race. While the mainstream media did not delve into Nakashima's wartime experience, *Maryknoll*, the magazine published by a Catholic denomination, which had a significant number of followers among Japanese Americans, covered its critical impact on his life. Later, Nakashima presented a more critical view on the incarceration in his autobiography.

Nakashima was born to a Japanese immigrant couple in Spokane, Washington in 1905. Encouraged by his parents, he enrolled at the University of Washington and studied forestry and architecture. After receiving a master's degree in architecture from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, he worked in New York, France, Japan, and India before returning to the United States in 1941. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and Executive Order 9066 was declared to forcibly remove all residents of Japanese ancestry from the West Coast, George, his wife Marion, and their newborn daughter who then lived in Seattle were sent to the Minidoka camp in Idaho. Although the incarceration was a traumatic and humiliating experience, the camp provided him with an opportunity to work closely with a well-trained Japanese carpenter on the project of building model rooms for detainees to give their lives some level of comfort and

[32] Nakashima, *Nature, Form, & Spirit*, 211.

dignity. The skills of wood joinery and the use of Japanese hand tools that the carpenter passed down to him became important assets for Nakashima who had lost much of his possessions as a result of the incarceration.[33]

His post-incarceration experience of perfecting woodworking as a means of independent living attracted considerable attention from the WRA. Nakashima was among a small group of detainees who were able to take advantage of the WRA's resettlement policy to leave the camp before the termination of the incarceration program. Soon after the incarceration had started, WRA officials as well as Japanese American leaders thought that the loyal portion of the camp population should be released. They mutually agreed that the detainees who posed no immediate threat should resettle in the Eastern parts of the country and engage in productive activities, which would cut down on the cost of maintaining the camps. Thus, those who were able to "secure an outside sponsor, furnish proof of employment or education, and submit themselves to FBI background checks" became eligible to apply for leave clearance.[34] Most of those who were willing to move to places where few other Japanese Americans resided were middle-class Nisei whose first language was English and "who were most open, psychologically and emotionally, to reducing—if not cutting—their ties to the ethnic community."[35] Thanks to the efforts of Nakashima's former boss Antonin Raymond, his wife, and other supporters who petitioned for the Nakashima family's release, they were able to leave the camp in May 1943. The petitioners attested that the Nakashimas had never been associated with the Japanese before World War II and were very well assimilated into the white community, which prompted the

[33] George Nakashima, *The Soul*, 69.
[34] Megan Asaka, "Resettlement," *Densho Encyclopedia*, accessed August 21, 2014, http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Resettlement/.
[35] Lane Ryo Hirabayashi, *Japanese American Resettlement through the Lens: Hikaru Iwasaki and the WRA's Photographic Section, 1943–1945* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2009), xviii.

WRA's decision to categorize them as loyal Americans and qualify them for release.[36] The Nakashimas' resettlement in New Hope, Pennsylvania went smoothly as the petitioners had assured. The family's relocation was such a great example of what WRA officials intended for all the resettlers that they recorded his way of life with photographs of Nakashima working on his furniture, teaching his daughter how to use hand tools, and preparing a meal with his wife, all of which contributed to portraying Nakashima as a happy, successful, and independent family man. The Nakashimas in the WRA photos exhibited middle-class family values based on strictly defined gender roles. The father produced furniture to provide for the family; the mother worked joyfully in the kitchen, sometimes getting help from her husband. The house's interior also conformed to the norms of a regular American home with a Western style light, fireplace, and bed, except that there were rice bowls and chopsticks on a dining table. The family members wore Western attire and shoes in the house. All these signifiers of Americanness convinced WRA authorities that the Nakashimas could be presented as the exemplary figures for other Japanese American resettlers who needed to be assimilated into larger society.[37]

When the Museum of Modern Art exhibited his work in 1951 and the American Institute of Architects awarded him a craftsmanship gold medal in 1952, Nakashima attracted attention from popular magazines such as *House & Home*, *Life*, and *Look*, which featured his home that he built on his own and his ability in assimilating into the local community, keeping the family united, and surviving independently and creatively through the mechanical age. A *House &*

---

[36] Letter from June Mott, undated; Letter from Mabel Martin Jones, September 30, 1942, "Nakashima, George Katsutoshi," Japanese-American Internee Data File, Record Group 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.
[37] "War Relocation Authority Photographs of Japanese-American Evacuation and Resettlement," no. G-868 through G-880, Series 12: Relocation: New Homes, etc. (Various Places), volume 40, section E, Japanese American Relocation Digital Archives, accessed November 20, 2014, http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/jarda/.

*Home* article complimented the Nakashima home on being unique yet artfully blending into New Hope's scenery. Nakashima's use of indigenous woods for the house and furniture symbolized the family's adjustment to the local—predominantly white—social landscape, as opposed to transplanting a foreign custom to the host society. The article observed that Nakashima's "product and his way of life" had a Japanese flavor but were "still more like New Hope's old ways."[38] The author commended Nakashima for using Japanese ideas as supplemental elements in his work and living, which did not pose any threat to the existing cultural order of New Hope.

The images of the Nakashima home in magazines were filled with signifiers of the family's strong unity and pleasant life, which were in line with the contemporary values of American domesticity. The bond of the Nakashimas was represented by the living room's fireplace, "the symbol of the home."[39] A *Look* magazine article pictured the Nakashima family sitting intimately by the fireplace and sharing food.[40] The image presented the Nakashima home as a place where the Cold War ideal of the nuclear, heterosexual family was embodied; the father provided meat and potatoes to his family, and the mother assisted him in nurturing the children. Although their experiences of moving into the camp, resettling in a foreign place, and building their own house were remarkably different from what the typical American way of life was supposed to be, the images of the happy Nakashima family promoted the understanding that the Japanese Americans enjoyed the American way of life as a reward for being loyal and hardworking.

The above mentioned *Look* magazine article, which was titled "Nakashima and Son," not only highlighted Nakashima's leadership as the family head but also portrayed him as a

---

[38] "George Nakashima's Furniture, House, and Way of Life," *House and Home* 1, no. 3 (March 1952): 81.
[39] "New Forms for Fireplaces," *Life* (December 7, 1953): 139.
[40] Peter, "Nakashima and Son," 70.

competent father who could teach important woodworking skills to his heirs so that they had a means of living independently and creatively. The article particularly emphasized the bond between the two males in the family and how the fine woodworking skills were to be transmitted from the father to the son. Nakashima embodied an ideal Japanese American breadwinner who had established a stable family and taught the next generation the importance of self-help and diligence. This association between a Japanese American man and strong fatherhood was significant when seen in the context in which contemporary African American men were characterized as irresponsible and absent from home, which informed the description of the "pathological" African American culture in the 1965 Moynihan Report. A larger implication in the *Look* magazine article was that Japanese American men, who were emasculated and demeaned by the incarceration as enemy aliens, regained autonomy and strength as American citizens through their individual efforts. Like the WRA photos, this magazine article stressed Nakashima's manliness in relation to his family, which served to distinguish him from the contemporary emasculated Asian figure (for example, I. Y. Yunioshi in *Breakfast at Tiffany's*). The emphasis on Nakashima's recovery of male citizenship—to be able to make decisions for his own family and provide the foundation for living comfortably—was crucial in the making of a national narrative about liberal individualism and equal opportunity for success.

Nakashima, however, would not have accepted such a narrative uncritically. He was well aware of the state's violation of Japanese Americans' rights and racism that denigrated their dignity during World War II. One of the instances where Nakashima's hard stand against racism manifested itself was a 1960 *Maryknoll* magazine article in which he was featured as the architect for a church to be built in Japan. The main audience of *Maryknoll* magazine was its followers, and thus the magazine had relative freedom in deciding how to describe Nakashima's

experiences compared to mainstream magazines, which targeted a larger audience and had a number of interested parties involved in judging what can be included in their media.

The article did not use stern words to criticize the incarceration, probably due to the magazine's main purpose of telling stories of redemption. Nonetheless, it is still possible to read between the lines to discover Nakashima's voice that pointed out the state's wrongdoing. Nakashima stated that his life was "comparable to that of a tree planted in desert sand, subjected to a variety of elements, and finally transplanted to a soil and climate intended by God."[41] The metaphor of Nakashima as a tree planted in desert, subjected to harsh conditions, is evocative of the image of Nakashima going through various adversities—including anti-Japanese sentiment and the incarceration—for which he was a vulnerable target. Moreover, the desert is suggestive of the Minidoka camp because of the barren land on which it stood, where he was confined during World War II. Nakashima described that the incarceration was humiliating, as he had to live in a large, "dirt-floored cattle barn."[42] He emphasized the inhumane living conditions in the camp, whose huge barracks were partitioned barely with thin veneers to give minimum privacy to the detainees. Having gone through these difficulties, Nakashima empathized with his employees who were European war refugees. He mentioned, "I hired them because. . . like me, they were searching for a way of life that would not destroy human dignity."[43] He and his employees shared the experience of being disenfranchised in their own countries and were now in the same boat seeking peace and independence.

---

[41] Joseph M. M. Michenfelder, "George Nakashima: Artist in Wood," *Maryknoll* (March 1960): 5, George Nakashima Papers, box 9, James A. Michener Art Museum Library & Archives, Doylestown, Pennsylvania (hereafter referred to as GNPPA).
[42] Ibid., 6.
[43] Ibid., 8.

Nakashima's 1981 autobiography provided a space for him to express his resentment against the incarceration more strongly than he did in *Maryknoll* magazine:

> Pearl Harbor broke, and all of us of Japanese descent were put in concentration camps. My wife and I and our newly born daughter were sent to a camp in Idaho. This I felt at the time was a stupid, insensitive act, one by which my country could only hurt itself. It was a policy of unthinking racism. Even Eskimos with only a small percentage of Japanese blood were sent to the Western desert to die.[44]

The use of the term "concentration camps," rather than a more euphemistic "internment camps," suggests that Nakashima associated the U.S. government's treatment of its citizens of Japanese ancestry with the Nazis persecution of Jews. The indictment that the U.S. government's decision to incarcerate Japanese Americans was only to "hurt itself" pointed to the contradiction in what the government preached and what it did; while the United States sharply criticized the racism of the totalitarian states of Germany and Japan, it could not let go of its own prejudice against its people of color. The "unthinking racism," which was based solely on "blood," found its historical precedent in the "one blood policy" applied to African Americans in negating their human rights. Through this short but profound commentary, Nakashima put forth his unequivocal assertion that the incarceration was based on racism and was not justifiable in any way.

Nakashima mounted a branch of bitterbrush from the camp on the wall of his workshop as a reminder of the hardship he was forced to go through.[45] Keeping this piece of wood from Minidoka symbolized his long-held indignation against the U.S. government's decision to

---

[44] Nakashima, *The Soul*, 69–70.
[45] Julie V. Iovine, "George Nakashima," in *Modern Americana: Studio Furniture from High Craft to High Glam*, ed. Todd Merrill and Julie V. Iovine (New York: Rizzoli, 2008), 126.

incarcerate Japanese Americans. Nakashima's choice to lead an isolated life of woodworking in the countryside can be seen as a form of protest against the ruthless society that labeled a group of citizens and immigrants as enemies and locked them up. However, journalists and artists who visited his workshop and wrote about it rarely discussed his critical eye toward his society. What was frequently mentioned instead was his untiring effort and self-discipline, which enabled his successful comeback from almost nothing after the camp.

***Isamu Noguchi***

Because of his mixed racial and cultural background, Isamu Noguchi and people around him considered that he was uniquely entitled to preach the American way of life and democracy to the Japanese. Noguchi believed in the importance of the United States' role in reconnecting Japan with the international community in the wake of World War II, but it did not mean that he supported American democracy unconditionally. Through his art, Noguchi criticized how the U.S. government failed to ensure democracy for Japanese American citizens during the war.

Noguchi spent his childhood in Japan and was later trained as an artist in the United States and Europe. By the end of the 1920s, Noguchi had established his stature as an up-and-coming sculptor in New York. When the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, he felt obliged to take some action. "With a flash I realized I was no longer the sculptor alone," Noguchi stated in his autobiography, "I was not just American but Nisei. A Japanese-American."[46] Joining hands with West Coast Nisei intellectuals and artists, Noguchi organized the Nisei Writers' and Artists' Mobilization for Democracy, which advocated the loyalty of Japanese Americans and sought to refute the proposal of their mass incarceration. When the mobilization could not prevent the

[46] Isamu Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 25.

incarceration, Noguchi voluntarily entered the Poston camp in Arizona to direct an arts and crafts program for the detainees as a part of the WRA's project of "democratizing" Japanese Americans and making them assimilable to white American society.[47]

However, he left Poston after several months of self-incarceration. Noguchi, who identified with the liberal middle-class Japanese Americans associated with the Nisei Writers' and Artists' Mobilization for Democracy, failed to see a common goal with other detainees who he deemed to be "completely un-intelectual [*sic*], and with little apparent interest in the policies or politics of democracy."[48] Not only his political inclination but also his distinct background posed challenges for him to become a member of the camp community. Masayo Duus notes that the WRA assigned every detainee a serial number to control them, but Noguchi was apparently exempt from it.[49] He was a volunteer and thus escaped from the humiliation of one's identity being reduced to a number. In addition, Duus adds, "In the bachelor quarters several occupants were usually crammed together in a single room but Isamu had a big room all to himself with a big sculpture like an African mask at the front door."[50] The special treatment he received led detainees to suspect that he was "a spy" of the camp administration.[51] They saw the part-Caucasian avant-garde artist, whose reason to be in the camp was completely different from theirs, as being on the side of the authorities. Finding no ways to belong, Noguchi ultimately abandoned the goal of building a cooperative community he had set upon entering the camp.

This was not the first time his background obstructed his inclusion into a certain group. In the 1930s, art critic Henry McBride harshly criticized Noguchi's work using a racist language,

---

[47] Brian Masaru Hayashi, *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Internment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).
[48] Quoted in Masayo Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 171.
[49] Ibid., 170.
[50] Ibid., 171–2.
[51] Ibid., 171.

which had the effect of Othering him. Of the artist, McBride mentioned, "Isamu Noguchi, as his name indicates, stems from Japan, but he came to the West so early in life that he prefers now to have his art regarded as Occidental. It will be difficult to persuade the public to this opinion. Once an Oriental always an Oriental, it appears."[52] McBride neglected the fact that Noguchi was born an American and that he had all of his artistic training in the United States and Europe. Moreover, McBride's comment, "Once an Oriental always an Oriental," ominously anticipated Army General John L. DeWitt's infamous phrase, "A Jap is a Jap," uttered to express his deep suspicion of the loyalty of Nisei soldiers during World War II. When Noguchi completed *Death*, a sculpture of a hung figure, as a part of an exhibit to protest against the lynching of African Americans, McBride commented, "the grewsome [*sic*] study of a lynching, with a contorted figure dangling from an actual rope, may be like the photograph from which it was made, but as a work of art it is just a little Japanese mistake."[53] Denying Noguchi's ability to address a deeply rooted social problem, McBride belittled, emasculated, and excluded the artist from those who were supposedly more American and better equipped to engage with this domestic issue.

While his mixed-race background hampered his acceptance into a certain community before and during World War II, his hybridity became interpreted as a positive embodiment of America's democracy and melting pot ideal in the context of the postwar art world. In 1946, Noguchi was selected as one of the fourteen Americans to exhibit at a Museum of Modern Art show titled *Fourteen Americans*. In an *Art News* review of the exhibit, Thomas B. Hess discussed Noguchi's hybrid identity extensively, declaring that Noguchi "has fused in his art the

[52] Quoted in ibid., 151.
[53] Quoted in Amy Lyford, "Noguchi, Sculptural Abstraction, and the Politics of Japanese American Internment," *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 1 (March 2003): 140.

East and the West as they were fused in his body."[54] The article carried an old picture of young Noguchi dressed in kendo fencing gear, "star[ing] mournfully from behind a wooden mask with his intricate padding and wooden sword [and] stand[ing] barefooted in the pose of an ancient warrior."[55] Art historian Amy Lyford argues that Hess underscored Noguchi's transformation from a mournful "Japanese" child who looked as if he was confined in an old, rigid culture to an "American" artist who enjoyed the freedom of expressing his hybrid identity through art.[56] Hess celebrated "cultural fusion," an example of which was embodied in Noguchi himself and in his work, "as the future of postwar democratic culture in the United States."[57] Hess's account of Noguchi as a mediator of East and West was influential—so much so that it defined the way in which Noguchi was hereafter characterized in the context of art history.[58]

A reviewer for *View*, while not as enthusiastic as Hess, admitted the importance of Noguchi's work in the exhibit. In his review titled "Fourteen Minus One," Parker Tyler mentioned:

> A striking and not too encouraging aspect of the show is that the best exhibitor is Isamu Noguchi, whose nationality is boldly crossed, as his name attests, with the Japanese. Happily, Noguchi's American birth made it possible (if not inevitable) that he lives in the United States with its relative freedom of conditions for the artist. America as a land of good working conditions for the artist is probably the objective really aimed at by the show.[59]

---

[54] Thomas B. Hess, "Isamu Noguchi '46," *Art News* (September 1946): 34.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Lyford, *Isamu Noguchi's Modernism*, 164.
[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid., 9.
[59] Parker Tyler, "Fourteen Minus One," *View* (Fall 1946): 35.

The article's title indicated the "irony" Tyler felt—he was clearly ambivalent about the hybrid artist stealing the show dedicated to fourteen *Americans*. Admitting that Noguchi was the best exhibitor in the show, Tyler also keenly pointed out that Noguchi's inclusion in the exhibit served as a form of propaganda that conveyed the message that freedom, democracy, and opportunity to become successful were ensured to even an artist whose national identity spanned across the United States and its former enemy. For Tyler, Noguchi's belonging to America was not unconditional; Noguchi could choose his father's country, Japan, as his home and thus differed from other Americans who were "inevitably" American. Tyler's understanding conflicted with Hess's, who regarded hybridity as a quintessential American symbolism. Nonetheless, Tyler shared the view with Hess that Noguchi played an important role in highlighting America's freedom and tolerance for differences.

In contrast to how Noguchi's mixed heritage was a target of hostility in the 1930s, the artist's connections with both the United States and Japan came to be seen as a strength in the postwar context. Journalists reported favorably on Noguchi's "inherent" ability to understand both East and West and hoped that Noguchi, who was liberated by American art himself, could now act as an ambassador for Japan's postwar democratization. Noguchi's marriage to Yoshiko "Shirley" Yamaguchi, one of Japan's top actresses, best demonstrated Noguchi's symbolic role in acting as the bridge of understanding between East and West and in expanding U.S. influence into the former enemy nation. Naoko Shibusawa argues that in convincing the American public to "accept an alliance with Japan so quickly after the brutal war" to prevent the war-torn country from falling into communist hands, the image of the feminine, vulnerable, and loyal Japanese woman "helped to chip away at the wartime stereotype of brutal Japanese soldiers" and to

emphasize the necessity of extending America's patriarchal support to the victims of the war.[60] Some interpreted the relationship between Noguchi and Yamaguchi as symbolic of postwar U.S.-Japan relations: the patriarchal United States escorting feminized Japan to the modern, democratic, and capitalist world.

A 1952 *Time* magazine article shows how this figurative meaning of Noguchi's relationship with Yamaguchi in Japan in the wake of the Occupation played out in the media. The article characterized Yamaguchi as a woman who was susceptible to American influence and interested in learning "how to kiss" in American style to become a better actress.[61] This representation of Yamaguchi emphasized her femininity, trainability, and eagerness to learn American culture. In turn, Noguchi was described as a "famed California-born Japanese-American sculptor, who had been to Japan three times since the war preaching modern art." The article noted that the two "made a good team," as "Noguchi started spreading his modern ideas with lots of help from his wife." Their marriage symbolized an increasing American influence on Japanese culture under the U.S. Occupation.

The "modern ideas" that Noguchi introduced included those of how to Westernize Japanese clothing. The article reported, He takes familiar objects and gives them an up-to-date twist. Instead of bulky old-style kimonos, Shirley wears formfitting, Noguchi-designed robes with Zipper fasteners. . . . Says Noguchi: "Tradition is all well and fine, but it must be adapted to modern times."[62] The modern-style kimono that Noguchi designed provided Japanese women with a way to look beautiful without conforming to tradition and sacrificing practicality. Noguchi showed how traditional ways of Japan could be adapted to modernity and how Japanese women

[60] Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*, 4, 14.
[61] "Isamu-san & Shirley Too," *Time* (November 3, 1952): 78.
[62] Ibid.

could become modernized with the help of Americans. A reporter for the *New York Times* similarly commended Noguchi's role in "liberating" Yamaguchi and others from the old Japanese way of life that Japanese men had tried to protect against Western influence. The reporter commented, "Her delighted curiosity, her deep respect for serious creative art and her sense of being liberated into the international world are perhaps symbolic of her whole generation."[63] Using the image of Yamaguchi who was married to and "liberated" by Noguchi, American magazines and newspapers crafted a story of Noguchi representing and preaching American democracy and modernity in Japan.

When Noguchi and Yamaguchi were leading a newly married life, Yamaguchi starred in *Japanese War Bride* (1952). The Hollywood film, in which a Japanese woman marries an American GI and follows him to return to his home in California, was symbolic of the postwar U.S.-Japan relationship in which the defeated country became dependent on the mighty victor for its future. Yamaguchi played a docile and innocent Japanese woman, who did not threaten American men's masculinity. The film's happy ending of the war bride being accepted by the host society symbolized the assimilability of the Japanese into the American way of life, which was progressive in the sense that it promoted racial liberalism. At the same time, it promoted Cold War Orientalism by suggesting that the new Japan, embodied by the feminine war bride, needed America's heroic protection.

Noguchi and Yamaguchi decided to separate after four years of marriage when they felt that it was interfering with their careers. Although their married life was short, their image as a happily-married couple was interpreted as the epitome of postwar U.S.-Japan relations in the minds of those who believed in the virtues of America's democratizing crusade in Japan. In this

[63] Aline B. Louchheim, "Noguchi and 'Sculptured Gardens," *New York Times*, September 30, 1951.

narrative, the unequal power balance between Noguchi and Yamaguchi with the former exerting his influence over the latter, which was symbolic of America's dominance over Japanese society and landscape, rarely came to the surface.

While he represented the democratizing force in postwar Japan in this context, Noguchi did question the meaning of democracy at times, especially when it came to the treatment of Japanese American citizens during World War II. The concept of American democracy was fundamentally shaken when the U.S. government labeled Japanese Americans as enemy aliens, a judgment that was based solely on race. When the incarceration order was declared, Noguchi at first believed that he could be of help for detainees in constructing an ideal community in the camp and showcasing that even in an ad hoc community Japanese Americans were able to live democratically, thereby asserting their legitimacy as American citizens. Noguchi sympathized with John Collier, the head of the Bureau of Indian Affairs who arranged Noguchi's stay at the Poston camp and declared, "Though democracy perish [*sic*] outside, here [in the camp] would be kept its seeds."[64] However, Noguchi recounted later that he soon became disillusioned with the vision of creating a "democratic" community "by locking people up."[65] Noguchi was keenly aware of the racial prejudice behind the stated goal of the incarceration.

During his incarceration, Noguchi developed a sculptural idea that would later materialize as a series of artwork using light, which resulted from his experience of being confined in the camp. He mentioned to the leading Japanese art magazine *Geijutsu shincho* in 1954 that the idea of creating sculpture that contained light was inspired with his "dark prison-like life at the relocation camp at Poston" and his longing for "a brighter world." He reflected his

[64] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 25.
[65] Isamu Noguchi, interview by Kazue Kobata, 1986, transcript, 7, Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York.

desire "to free the dark world with *akari*."[66] This statement was indicative of not only his belief in a freer world but also his protest against the U.S. government's power that took away Japanese Americans' liberty in the name of democracy. While Noguchi explicitly connected his incarceration experience and the birth of what turned out to be a highly successful line of paper lanterns named *Akari* in the *Geijutsu shincho* article, there was no mention of this critical background in contemporary American magazines in which *Akari* was featured. Their articles almost exclusively focused on the harmonization of Eastern tradition and modern Western abstraction realized in *Akari*.[67] It is not certain whether Noguchi chose not to talk to American reporters about how the bitterness of the incarceration experience inspired him with the idea for *Akari*, but the absence of this story in the contemporary American media indicates their depoliticization of Noguchi. The American mainstream media in general rarely reported Noguchi's critical view on the incarceration, possibly because an accusation of the government's wrongdoing could have been considered as a threat to national unity during the Cold War. Instead of discussing the underlying concept of *Akari* that questioned the state's ability to protect the well-being of its people, the American media focused exclusively on the aesthetic quality of the work.

Although Noguchi's symbolic role as an East-West bridge worked to his advantage in emphasizing his uniqueness in the American art world, it also made Noguchi uncertain about his national belonging and ethnic identity. He raised this issue in his autobiography:

---

[66] Translated and quoted in Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 183; Isamu Noguchi, "Akari," *Geijutsu shincho* 5 (August 1954): 194.
[67] "New Shapes for Lighting: Sculptor's Lamps Are Dim, Decorative," *Life* (March 10, 1952): 114–15, 117; "New Lamps from the Old World," *House and Home* (April 1952): 148; "Noguchi in Kitakamura [*sic*]," *Interiors* 112 (November 1952): 117–120, 171, 172.

> With my double nationality and double upbringing, where was my home? Where my affections? Where my identity? Japan or America, either, both—or the world? . . . I find myself a wanderer in a world rapidly growing smaller. Artist, American citizen, world citizen, belonging anywhere but nowhere.[68]

This statement reflects his struggle of not being accepted as a legitimate American (by a reviewer of the *Fourteen American* show) or Japanese American (by the Poston Japanese American community). Regardless of his precariousness, the media overwhelmingly represented him as a successful, exemplary figure in promoting cultural diversity in the United States and extending democracy to Japan.

**Conclusion**

*Time*, *Life*, *House & Home*, *Architectural Forum*, and other magazines on art and lifestyle fondly narrated stories of the three Nisei's remarkable transformation from the racially stigmatized to some of the most successful American cultural entrepreneurs. At a time when the United States propagated its cultural and racial diversity to the world, Yamasaki, Nakashima, and Noguchi effectively represented the new faces of postwar America—racial minorities who, through their untiring efforts, achieved success and access to the American way of life. The American media celebrated these Nisei's postwar lives and works that exhibited the values of the individualism and freedom of expression that American democracy was supposed to ensure for its loyal subjects. The Nisei men did not necessarily concur with the idea that American democracy had always benefitted them because of their firsthand experiences in the nation's undemocratic hostility. However, their critical views on racism rarely made it onto the pages of

[68] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 11, 39.

popular magazines in the 1950s and 1960s. Like many other Nisei, they might have avoided raising the issue of racism in front of American journalists for fear that evoking the memory of anti-Japanese sentiment could rekindle prejudice and obstruct the recovery of their social status; or they might have been simply unable to bring up the issue vis-à-vis powerful interest groups in the publishing industry. Either way, the dominant discourse of the media at that time allowed little room for them to express themselves freely. It was not until the 1970s and 1980s when the socio-political climate was more tolerant of minority movements that the Nisei artists/architects were able to more openly discuss their wartime experiences. Nonetheless, outside the American mainstream media, they found venues where they could maintain their firm stance against racism, for they knew all too well how it impacted every aspect of their lives.

## Chapter 2
## Emotional, Spiritual, Poetic:
## Nisei Cultural Producers' Strategic Formations of Professional Identity

The post-World War II economic boom of the United States gave rise to mixed feelings of optimism and anxiety among the American public. As European powers struggled to recover from the devastating war, the United States became the world's foremost economic giant, which fueled its aspiration and optimism for furthering technological progress and space exploration. Concurrently, the expanding mechanization, urbanization, and consumerism sparked concerns for American people. Memories of the disasters of World War II lingered; death camps and atomic bombs served as reminders for how technology could be misused to exterminate a group of people—or wipe out the human race altogether from the face of the earth.[1] The arms race between the United States and the Soviet Union constantly renewed anxiety about a possible World War III. Conflicting views about the vice and virtue of modern society gave rise to discussions in many sections of society, including the fields of art and architecture. Artists and architects discussed issues about the relationship between the arts and the machine, along with the social role of cultural producers, and tackled the difficult question of whether technological advancement and human progress should be equated or not. The arena for these discussions welcomed various opinions not only from cultural elites, but also from up-and-coming artists and architects.

In this chapter I focus on how Minoru Yamasaki, George Nakashima, and Isamu Noguchi engaged in debates about the role of artists and architects in creating culturally valuable and meaningful products and designs in modern society. While their specific standpoints were as

[1] For further discussion on the coexistence of the anxiety over nuclear threat and the hope for atomic-age progress, see Ann Sherif, *Japan's Cold War: Media, Literature, and the Law* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 32.

different as the media for their expressions, they commonly had issues with the American cultural landscape that they felt was becoming increasingly impersonal, mechanized, and automatized. They all sought unique ways as Japanese American cultural producers to respond to the call for new approaches for the betterment of American culture and society in the age of mass production.

Yamasaki, Nakashima, and Noguchi leveraged their racial and ethnic identities to make an impact in critical conversations about American culture and society in the mid-century. They suggested that their works, which drew hints from traditions and aesthetics of Japan, would supplement and enrich the emotional, spiritual, or poetic dimension of American culture. Their notion that Japanese traditions and aesthetics retained personal and warm qualities that were increasingly neglected in the United States was predicated on the widespread belief about the dichotomy of the "spiritual East" and the "materialistic West."[2] Rather than solely promoting the conventional exoticization of Japan and being easy prey for the very exoticization themselves, they each engaged in revising the notion of Japan as an exotic, foreign, and remote entity, which could only be viewed as the polar opposite of Western civilization. They stressed how ideas from Japan actually fit into and improved the American "culture of abundance," whose formation greatly depended on technological progress and corporate liberalism.[3]

At the height of the Cold War and in the midst of burgeoning U.S.-Japan cultural exchange, the Nisei cultural producers had to carefully navigate their ways through the American art and architectural worlds. They were vulnerable to the habit of critics looking at their oeuvres

---

[2] The dichotomy of the "spiritual East" and the "materialistic West" was popularized by Daisetz T. Suzuki's *Zen and Japanese Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1959). For further discussion, see Winther-Tamaki, *Art*, 10.

[3] Warren I. Susman, *Culture as History* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984); Daniel Belgrad, *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

through an Orientalizing lens just because their names implied their Japanese heritage. In 1946, Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* reinforced the idea that the Americans of Japanese ancestry who received education in Japan inherited authentic Japanese culture, which was most "alien" to Americans.[4] Benedict assumed Japanese and American cultures as fixed categories that were never to blend with each other. Going against this understanding, Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki suggested the possibilities of blurring the boundaries between the two cultures. The three men challenged the Cold War Orientalist assumption of "America" being superior and benevolent enough to preserve and protect "Japan." Through their artistic and architectural activities, they invited their audiences to rethink the existing notions about cultural hierarchy between America and Japan.

The three men differently utilized their Japanese ethnic identity in this endeavor. For Yamasaki, expressing his Japaneseness required some restraint and careful strategy because of the nature of his profession. He emphasized the importance of "serenity, surprise, and delight," the vague notions which he believed represented traditional Japanese aesthetics, to break the monotonous repetition of severe glass-and-steel buildings in the city. Advocating the uniqueness of the inspiration he received for his designs, he differentiated his work from other mid-century modern architects and challenged the American architectural world's status quo. At the same time, Yamasaki needed to avoid overemphasizing his buildings' Japaneseness, which would expose them to the risk of being Orientalized and considered inapt for American living spaces. For an architect whose work centered on designing large-scale buildings for the city, technology was the most essential tool for the expression of his artistry. Maintaining his image as a pragmatic "American" architect who could meet certain technological and budgetary

[4] Ruth Benedict, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946), 1, 6.

requirements and provide eye-appealing buildings was ultimately more important than reflecting "Japaneseness" into his achitecture.

In contrast to Yamasaki, the other two men who worked in the fields that allowed more freedom to assert their creativity actively leveraged their racial and ethnic identities in establishing the uniqueness of their art. Nakashima maintained some physical and emotional distance from the city and the mass production system to take control over his production, which enabled him to use his Japanese ethnic identity more straightforwardly for his interest. He indicated that his Japanese heritage, along with his religious experiences, was suitable for the role of filling the spiritual need of the Americans. Simultaneously, he emphasized his work's relevance in the age of counterculture movement, rather than presenting it as a relic of the Japanese past. As one writer put it, Nakashima's furniture became considered as a form of uniquely second-generation American art.[5]

Like Nakashima, Noguchi took advantage of his Japanese heritage actively in pursuing his career. As I will discuss in chapters 3 and 4, Noguchi's paternal lineage was critical in giving him access to important cultural knowledge with which he established the distinctiveness of his art. Through using Japanese stones in his works, he claimed his Japanese heritage and expressed his intimate understanding of Japanese tradition and aesthetics. At the same time, Noguchi carefully tried to preclude the possibility that his art would be considered "Japanese" and irrelevant to Western contexts. He emphasized his sculpture's relationship to its specific surroundings—American urban settings or otherwise.

The Nisei cultural producers promoted the understanding that their works were a combination of their imaginative interpretations of ideas from Asia and their solid workmanship

[5] "George Nakashima: His Furniture, His House, His Way of Life," *House and Home* (Mach 1952): 82.

based on Euro-American artistic/architectural education and training. They saw to it that the result of this multicultural fusion of concepts and methods would be regarded as a truly second-generation American creation rather than an obsolete eclecticism. While master artists such as Pablo Picasso and Paul Gauguin actively incorporated so-called "primitive" cultures' methods of expression into their own, their status as white men from the civilized world justified their nostalgia for preindustrial arts and cultures and shielded them from the risk of being Othered. For the Nisei cultural producers, however, their Americanness became less clear when their engagement with Japanese artistic philosophies was emphasized. This could marginalize them in the sphere of modern art whose concern centered on the white Westerner's experiences of modernity.

This was a time when an increasing number of Americans were ambivalent about Western "progress," yet faith in the free-market economy and industrialism had taken deep root in many of their attitudes as a result of anticommunist propaganda. The Japanese American cultural producers' multicultural approaches evoked various responses, both positive and negative, from artist/architect circles and beyond. Regardless of the degree to which they managed to increase their supporters, all of them succeeded in inventing and assuming the role of enhancing the non-material aspect of American culture. They pointing out what Western "progress" had left out and claimed the ability to supplement it. By doing so, they challenged Cold War Orientalism's assumption that white American civilization was superior to non-white civilizations.

**Minoru Yamasaki**

When the Port of New York Authority (later renamed as the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, hereafter collectively referred to as PA) announced in late 1962 that it selected 49-year-old Japanese American architect Minoru Yamasaki as the designer for its World Trade Center (WTC) to be built in Manhattan, the news quickly circulated the nation. Yamasaki was, as it turned out, the most ideal architect that the PA could ask for. First, Yamasaki was less expensive compared to older and more experienced architects; second, and more importantly, Yamasaki's architectural philosophy and personal background fit most perfectly with the PA's vision for the new landmark of New York's financial district. The publicity Yamasaki received through the WTC commission gave him an opportunity to advance his theory on the "surprise, serenity, and delight" of architecture that he had developed after his trip to Japan in the mid-1950s. Yamasaki stressed the importance of these intuitive human reactions that an "emotional" quality of a kind of architecture, rich in decoration and warm in feeling, could evoke. He contrasted the "emotional" quality against the cold, impersonal, and brutal characteristics that he attributed to glass-and-steel or concrete box-like buildings.[6] The final design of the WTC did not necessarily evoke a warm feeling among critics, but it represented Yamasaki's important challenge against purely functionalist architecture and his attempt to spread the understanding that his decoratively rich structure was crucial for humanizing a city dominated by symbols of technology-driven Western "progress."

[6] "A Conversation with Yamasaki," 110–118.

***Design Philosophy***

Yamasaki reached his maturity as an architect at a turning point of modern architecture when the dominance of the International Style waned gradually and diversity became a key concept. The International Style, which became popular in the 1920s, reflected new constructional methods made available by advanced industrial technology and geared toward providing functional and economical buildings to house urban workers and residents.[7] While the International Style met the New Deal era's call for economical, austere, and functional buildings, its dominance was interrupted by the postwar economic boom that gave rise to an aesthetic that embraced affluence. The growing importance of visual culture, best exemplified in the dominance of photography and advertising in the mass media, prompted architecture to get more glamorous to catch consumers' eyes.[8] As Alice T. Friedman mentions, the styles of this period's architecture, which came to be called Mid-Century Modern collectively, varied significantly, but there were some commonalities among them; they "were intended to be looked at and photographed," with their surfaces "functioning like makeup on skin or accessories on a well-dressed body."[9] This new trend in architecture served in Yamasaki's favor, since it laid the ground on which he could explore the possibilities of his decorative architecture for which he received inspiration from his recent trips to Japan, India, Europe, and the Middle East. Yamasaki ultimately became very successful as a Mid-Century Modern architect whose work met public taste and provided alternative forms to those based on the formal aesthetic tradition of modern architecture that prohibited excessive ornamentation.

---

[7] Charles Jencks, *Modern Movements in Architecture*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), 373.
[8] Alice T. Friedman, *American Glamour and the Evolution of Modern Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 8.
[9] Ibid., 6.

Yamasaki's expressive aesthetics characterized by the frequent use of sumptuous-looking materials and Gothic-like arches were not very distant from those adopted by contemporary star architects such as Eero Saarinen and Edward Durell Stone in their attempts to grab the attention of a broader audience. However, Yamasaki was unique in referring to Japan as a source of inspiration, which guided him conceptually rather than gave him concrete design motifs. While leading American architects acknowledged the relevance of traditional Japanese architecture to modernism,[10] few were as outspoken as Yamasaki about its influence on their own works perhaps because they feared of being associated with anti-technology and historicism that were despised by the mainstream as regressive attitudes. Yamasaki did not think that Japanese architecture should only be appreciated as a thing of the past. He asserted that even though Japan's traditional low-rise and wooden structures themselves were impractical "to house 20th-century civilisation," there was much to learn from their human-centered design when "the chaos caused by political turmoil, by traffic, by vast increases in population, and by the tremendous impact of the machine, demands that man must have a serene architectural background to retain his sanity."[11] By assuming the role of preaching the merits of learning from traditional Japanese architecture to the rest of the world, he tried to add a scarcity value to himself in the field where many strived to showcase their art merely through scientific and technological means.

In justifying the validity and importance of his emphasis on the humanistic elements of architecture and his inspiration from Japan, Yamasaki referred to a "master of surprise" of the early twentieth century: Frank Lloyd Wright. Although Wright never publicly admitted that he

---

[10] For example, Walter Gropius was an enthusiastic supporter of traditional Japanese architecture such as the Katsura Detached Palace. See Gropius's foreword to Kenzo Tange, *Katsura: Tradition and Creation in Japanese Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960).
[11] Minoru Yamasaki, "A Humanist Architecture for America and Its Relation to the Traditional Architecture of Japan," *RIBA* 68, no. 3 (January 1961): 97–98.

received influence from Japanese traditional architecture, scholars have found enough reasons to assume Wright's deliberate adoption of Japanese architectural ideas.[12] In his speech delivered at the fourth annual conference of the northwest regional council of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Yamasaki mentioned, "Wright is a master of surprise. I can guess that his discovery of the possibilities inherent in surprise in architecture was in Japanese temples. We can learn from Wright and from the Orient and with this quality of surprise infuse our buildings with new interest and delight and thus add to the pleasure of life."[13] Yamasaki understood that Wright discovered the pleasure of encountering the unexpected in Japanese temples—finding a spacious room or carefully arranged courtyard after walking through a dark corridor, for example—and advocated the importance of incorporating this element into his and his contemporaries' architecture. Yamasaki argued that "the delight of interesting silhouettes, of waterplay, of variety in our indoor and outdoor spaces," which he found utilized effectively in Japanese architecture, could well become part of modern architecture and offer correctives to the dominance of "modular industrialised architecture."[14] Justifying the virtue of a harmony between Japanese and American traditions by referring to the example of the most "American" of architects in the early twentieth century, Yamasaki sought ways to translate this emotional value, which was increasingly belittled in machine-dominated architectural processes, into his architecture and bring back a visual pleasure to everyday lives in congested and chaotic postwar American cities.

---

[12] Kevin Nute, *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: The Role of Traditional Japanese Art and Architecture in the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993); William A. Gleason, *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2011).

[13] Minoru Yamasaki, "Visual Delight in Architecture" (presented before the fourth annual conference of the northwest regional council, AIA, Many Glacier Hotel, Mont., September 10, 1955), *Architectural Record* (November 1955), MYP, box 2, folder 1.

[14] Yamasaki, "A Humanist Architecture," 98.

Yamasaki aimed to establish a unique position for himself in the field of architecture by asserting how Japanese ideas could provide a practical solution suitable for modern American society.

Connecting his architectural philosophy with that of the acclaimed architect, who was known for his organic and personal buildings than any other architects of the early twentieth century, served to indicate that his work embraced values that was overlooked in the International Style. Yamasaki in fact had to dissociate himself immediately from the International Style. Yamasaki's foremost International Style work—St. Louis's Pruitt-Igoe on which he worked in the early 1950s—was judged as a fiasco only a few years after it was hailed as an embodiment of an ideal public housing of the future upon completion. Critics pointed out not only the city's poor management and maintenance of the project, which stemmed from its discrimination against largely black Pruitt-Igoe residents, but also the problem of the building's design that prioritized economy and function over the residents' actual needs.[15] What came out of the project was not what Yamasaki had initially envisioned. A 1972 *Christian Science Monitor* article reported:

> His first scheme would have combined garden apartments with towers in a well-landscaped setting, including cultural, recreational and commercial facilities. But the Public Housing Authority increased the density from 30 to 55 people per acre, thus eliminating the garden units. Further economies included leaving paint off the concrete block walls of the galleries and stairwells, leaving insulation off the exposed stem pipes, leaving screens off the gallery windows, and reducing landscaping to nothing. By 1962, about ten years after its inception, Pruitt-Igoe was ablaze with boredom, vandalism and

[15] Katharine G. Bristol, "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth," *Journal of Architectural Education* 44, no. 3 (May 1991): 163–171.

crime. Cost-saving measures came back to haunt the authority and the architect.

Yamasaki, a sincere and humane man, admitted, "It's a job I wish I'd never done."[16] Yamasaki preserved this article in his scrapbook and underlined parts of the above quote, which indicated his approval of what was written. As described in the article, Yamasaki's original plan included green and recreational areas to improve the residential community's way of life, which challenged the International Style's prioritization of functionalism and cost-efficiency. However, the architect's "arguments for including amenities [fell on the] deaf ears" of city officials.[17] Yamasaki's first major attempt at realizing "the philosophy of humanism in architecture," which he believed was based on "love, gentleness, joy, serenity, beauty and hope," did not see the light of the day.[18] Faced with the ironic criticism that Pruitt-Igoe epitomized the impersonal and inhospitable characteristics of the International Style despite Yamasaki's effort at moving away from it, Yamasaki strengthened his determination to focus on improving the humane aspect of his future architecture. Constructing his image as an architect inspired by Wright and Japanese tradition thus served two purposes: distracting attention from the Pruitt-Igoe failure and taking advantage of general popularity in things from Japan in order to distinguish himself from other Mid-Century Modern architects.

In his work leading up to the WTC, Yamasaki sought to recreate the "feeling of peace and pleasure" that he found in "the Katsura Palace, the Stone Garden, and in so many other examples of Japanese architecture" in order to relieve what he regarded the brutal and monotonous looks of American urban cities and thereby bring serenity to the minds of those who

[16] William Marlin, "The Ides of Pruitt-Igoe," *Christian Science Monitor*, August 8, 1972, MYP, box 31, scrapbook 1.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Yamasaki, "A Humanist Architecture," 96.

lived and worked in them.[19] He warned that minimalist functionalism, which became popular with Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's influential "less is more" dictum, was becoming almost like "fetish or religion," and that Mies imitators threatened to homogenize cityscapes and made a walk down the street boring. He advocated the need to put an end to the "miles of façade where sun and shadow are meaningless: aluminum, glass, porcelain enamel interspersed with brick, all flush."[20] Yamasaki argued that American architects could learn ways to supplement what was lacking in a conventional functional building by studying the use of varying materials, patterns, and contours that produced an interesting play of shadows and a warm feeling for a Japanese house.

In the McGregor Memorial Conference Center (completed in 1958) on Wayne State University campus in Detroit, Michigan and the Reynolds Metal Regional Sales Office (1959) in Southfield, Michigan, which won him two of the four prestigious AIA First Honor awards that he would eventually get during his lifetime, Yamasaki tried to demonstrate how his architectural ideals about serenity, surprise, and delight could be achieved using Western materials. For the McGregor Center, he used concrete slabs with triangular ends for the floors to create an interesting silhouette against the sky. Atop the ceiling rested a triangular-patterned skylight. Marble-clad steel columns and ornamental sunshades gave the façade a sumptuous feeling.[21] The Reynolds Office, which is often compared with Edward Durell Stone's famous U.S. Embassy in India (1956) and the Taj Mahal that Stone's building alluded to, stood in the middle of pools on a podium and boasted the aluminum grille that functioned as screens and shone like gems reflecting rays of sunshine. "Jewel on stilts" became a nickname for this eye-catching

[19] Ibid., 97.
[20] Yamasaki, "Visual Delight in Architecture."
[21] "Yamasaki's Serene Campus Center," *Architectural Forum* 109 (August 1958): 78–79.

architecture.[22] The use of such details on these two structures clearly set them apart from uniform glass-and-steel box buildings and helped Yamasaki greatly in achieving his goal of delighting the eyes of the public. As soon as these structures were completed, they dominated pages of trade magazines and local publications, which contributed to raising Yamasaki's stature that he needed for becoming an appropriate candidate for the WTC commission.

Yamasaki's Federal Science Pavilion—"a buoyant, crystalline stylization of the Alhambra," according to *Time* magazine—for the 1962 Seattle Century 21 Exposition likewise attracted positive attention of the media and, moreover, provided the opportunity for a PA executive to learn about the Nisei architect.[23] Guy Tozzoli, who was to lead the WTC project, later recounted the peaceful and delightful otherworldly atmosphere that he felt upon entering the pavilion ground, which consisted of an all-white windowless structure, Moorish arcades, Gothic arches, and reflective pools.[24] The pavilion not only served as a popular destination for fairgoers but also symbolized Yamasaki's success story; *Time* magazine described the architect as "a wiry, 132-lb. Nisei who was born 50 years ago in a slum less than two miles from where the Science Pavilion now stands."[25] In this article, the Japanese American man who pulled himself up by his own bootstraps became a personification of the American dream. The seeming mismatch of an elegant Alhambra-like structure and a lean Nisei figure underscored the long way Yamasaki had come to achieve his stardom. The circulation of Yamasaki's model minority narrative, epitomized in this *Time* magazine article, was to give the PA great publicity and the WTC a rationale for claiming itself to be the foremost symbol of the virtue of capitalistic meritocracy.

---

[22] "'Jewel on Stilts' Rises Over Lily Pool," *Detroit Free Press*, April 29, 1957, MYP, box 1, folder 15; Larry S. Tajiri, "Vagaries," *Pacific Citizen*, May 10, 1957.
[23] "Go West, Everybody," *Time* 79, issue 17 (April 27, 1962): 60.
[24] Glanz and Lipton, *City in the Sky*, 88–89.
[25] "Go West, Everybody."

### *World Trade Center: A Combination of Technological Exhibitionism and Emotional Architecture*

Successfully getting the public enamored with the McGregor Center, the Reynolds Office, and the Science Pavilion, Yamasaki went on to acquire the largest architectural commission in his, or any architect's, career: the design of the World Trade Center. In his application for the commission, Yamasaki mentioned, "The great scope of your project demands finding a way to scale it to the human being so that, rather than be an overpowering group of buildings, it will be inviting, friendly, and humane. Its great spaces need the excitement and delight of change of pace, of surprise, of interest, to avoid the danger of an overwhelming multiplicity of repeated modules."[26] The architect made it clear—as he had been doing so prior to this point—that he would not just provide a functional office space; he emphasized his intention to beautify the area through his skilled use of form and silhouette. Furthermore, Yamasaki promoted the positive emotional effects of his work, stressing his ability to create an oasis-like humane atmosphere, the popularity of which he had proven through his successful projects preceding to the WTC.

In order to understand the significance of Yamasaki's selection as the designer of the WTC, it is beneficial to review the origin and purpose of the project. The launch of the WTC project took place against a backdrop of the U.S. government's growing interest in exhibiting its economic and technological power against the Soviet Union.[27] John F. Kennedy's plans to send American astronauts to the moon epitomized national aspiration for being the first to go beyond the existing limits and conquer the newest frontiers. The WTC also reflected the desire to reach higher and to manifest American wealth and progress.

---

[26] Anthony Robins, *The World Trade Center* (Englewood, Fla.: Pineapple Press, 1987), 26–27.
[27] Gillespie, *Twin Towers*, 10.

The ideas for the WTC first formed under the auspices of the Rockefellers—probably the most powerful personification of American capitalism and industrialism.[28] In the postwar era, chairman of Chase Manhattan Bank David Rockefeller decided that he needed to do something about the decline in lower Manhattan's real estate values where he and his clan had invested so much of their fortune. As he opened the One Chase Manhattan Plaza in 1961 to signal his commitment to revive Wall Street, he formed the Downtown Lower Manhattan Association (DLMA) to organize and promote the area's redevelopment.[29] The architects Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill were appointed to search for potential redevelopment plans, and one of the ideas they proposed was a world trade center, which David Rockefeller decided to pursue.[30] The DLMA chose the Port of New York Authority (PA), a quasi-public agency that had jurisdiction over building roads, bridges, and airports for transportation, to direct the project. Because of this arrangement, then New York governor Nelson Rockefeller could use billions of public dollars to help his brother David on his redevelopment plan.[31] Without using their own money, the Rockefeller brothers were able to proceed with the project to protect and boost their wealth, which would transform the historic neighborhood.

In order to distract public attention away from this controversial issue of public money being used to build a huge office complex for profit making, and to direct it toward positive causes of the WTC, the PA needed an architect who was capable of representing "man's highest ideals, imagination and creative ability" through his expertise and give Manhattan an outstanding and original symbol suitable for the capital of world trade.[32] The PA was convinced that

[28] Darton, *Divided We Stand*.
[29] Robins, *The World Trade Center*, 10.
[30] Ibid., 10–11.
[31] Darton, *Divided We Stand*, 44.
[32] Robins, *The World Trade Center*, 24–25.

Yamasaki was the perfect architect it could obtain. The architect was interested in providing a humane space to counterbalance the inhumane largeness of a skyscraper. The technocratic PA—with its own skilled engineers ready to engage in any challenges that the WTC project would pose—knew that it wanted their structure to be higher than the Empire State Building to manifest its technological prowess. Tozzoli said, "Yama, President Kennedy is going to put a man on the moon. I want you to build me the tallest buildings in the world."[33] And yet, technology was not the only aspect of the WTC that the PA desired to show off. For the building design, the PA wanted something innovative and novel that would not blend into conventional International Style skyscrapers that pervaded Manhattan.

The PA's vision coincided with Yamasaki's hope that the WTC, as a landmark project in his career, would serve to highlight his belief in the importance of humanizing a monotonous and brutal American cityscape and not be regarded merely as an overwhelming and materialistic incarnation of American economic and technological power. Even with the gigantic size in which the towers had to be in order to fulfill vast office space requirements to secure revenue, he repeatedly expressed his will to give his towers a warm, inviting feeling. While making clear that he acknowledged the importance of technology, he suggested the need of non-technological values—elements of surprise, visual pleasure, and humanism—as well for the well-being of American society. Yamasaki sought to advance the idea that he was able to bring the country back on track from its excessive entrancement with science and technology, which was taking a toll on the healthy and organic human environment.

Not only his design philosophy but also his image as a self-made Japanese American man was a perfect fit for the project. As a Nisei man who overcame blunt prewar racism and

[33] Quoted in Gillespie, *Twin Towers*, 48.

advocated combining the strengths of American technology and the emotional values he attributed to Japanese architecture, he presumably symbolized a model of amicable interracial and intercultural relationships, which both PA officials and Yamasaki regarded necessary preconditions for their idealized views of world trade. In addition to highlighting Yamasaki's bicultural heritage, the mass media often took note of a great multicultural atmosphere that filled his office where professionals and students from all over the world worked side by side.[34] One newspaper article noted how Yamasaki's "cosmopolitan" operation enabled a "cross fertilization" of ideas and promoted collaboration, rather than competition, "to make a more enjoyable and more effective life."[35] The American ideologies of democracy and humanism gained more significance when embodied by someone whose success as a non-white architect supposedly represented the workings of those very ideologies.

In the early stage of the project, Yamasaki actively participated in making the narrative of the WTC as a symbol of "world peace" and "democracy." Explaining his visions of the WTC, Yamasaki mentioned,

> Paramount in importance is the relation of world trade to world peace, since the communication and understanding between nations implicit in trade is basic to peace. Man today identifies himself with and is as dedicated to world peace as he has been to the great causes of the past. Thus, the architectural opportunity exists in this project to make this complex of buildings a living symbol of man's dedication to world peace. Beyond the compelling need to make this a monument to world peace, the WTC should, because of its importance, become a living representation of man's belief in humanity, his need

[34] Lisa Toishigawa, "Nisei Architect Finds Race No Detriment to Opportunity in United States," *Hawaii Hochi*, September 26, 1963; Howard Seemann, "Yamasaki Work Reflects 'Visual Experience,'" *Daily Tribune*, Royal Oak, Michigan, February 11, 1964, MYP, box 1, folder 15.
[35] Seemann, "Yamasaki Work Reflects 'Visual Experience.'"

> for individual dignity, his beliefs in the cooperation of men, and through this cooperation his ability to find greatness. It should reflect the qualities of life which he so passionately seeks of truth and serenity, of hope and joy for all men, qualities integral to the kind of democracy for which he aspires.[36]

Yamasaki carefully avoided using the terms that would have implied that the WTC was an American project for Americans. Instead he set forth the idea that the WTC could be a positive symbol of world peace mediated by trade for "humanity" and "all men." Yamasaki's belief in constructing world peace and democracy through capitalism sounded overly optimistic in the context in which the Civil Rights Movement reached its height and the United States' military intervention in Vietnam under the very banners of world peace and democracy in the late 1960s and early 1970s was met with fervent opposition from the general public. Even though Yamasaki did have issues with the undemocratic racism and prejudice that pervaded American society, he deemphasized his concerns regarding these problems during his involvement in the WTC project, which indicated his desire to highlight the promises that the WTC represented and to maximize the project's positive effects on his career.

When completed, the WTC's unprecedented features quickly attracted attention of the media and professional circles. Of all its features, technological sophistication received most praises. In vicinity, the WTC's structural elements manifested technological innovations, which were especially visible on the bearing walls. The façades' salient pinstripes were steel columns, which, together with the inner core that enclosed the elevator shafts, supported the weight of the whole structure. The engineering firm Worthington, Skilling, Helle & Jackson invented these columns, getting rid of a conventional steel frame normally adopted in an International Style

[36] "Yamasaki's Architecture Soars to 'Great Heights,'" *Birmingham Eccentric*, Michigan, January 30, 1964, MYP, box 2, folder 2.

skyscraper whose columns pierced through each floor to provide support.[37] The WTC's load-bearing steel columns maximized the column-free space inside the building, making it possible to accommodate a greater number of tenants on each floor. The WTC also boasted an innovative and efficient sky lobby system for its elevators. Passengers would ride express elevators on the ground floor and then transfer midway to local elevators for their specific destinations.[38] This system allowed the WTC to have fewer elevators in the lobby area, contributing to making it spacious rather than congested. Technologically, the PA got what it wanted; major trade magazines hailed the project's innovativeness that made possible the tallest and most efficient office towers ever—although, as I discuss later, they did not necessarily like the aesthetics.

While the technological achievements were a result of Yamasaki's collaboration with the engineers, the intricate designs of the buildings and the huge plaza were Yamasaki's own. The PA chose him for the job over other candidates, hoping that he could exhibit the best of his one-of-a-kind creativity and artistic idioms even within certain practical limitations. While PA officials had a say in the WTC design,[39] Yamasaki was the one who provided concrete design motifs and was ultimately responsible for what came out. Although the WTC might not have looked "Japanese" in a conventional sense, Yamasaki stressed his unique ideas inspired by Japanese architecture: light, delicate, and warm-looking façades of the buildings, which he believed would bring a visual pleasure to visitors, and controlled and secure space to enjoy the towers.

The architect's particular interest in realizing an inviting, intimate feeling for the 110-story buildings manifested itself on the skyscraper façades. Every three of the bearing-wall

[37] Glanz and Lipton, *City in the Sky*, 120.
[38] Yamasaki, *A Life in Architecture*, 118.
[39] Glanz and Lipton, *City in the Sky*, 104–111.

columns merged into one at the bottom of the towers to form Gothic-like arches, creating a sight different from a mundane International Style building entrance which exhibited more rigid and straight lines. Yamasaki mentioned, "I like curves in buildings. I like the play of arches and arcades."[40] To pursue elegance further, Yamasaki used light and warm-colored aluminum panels for the exterior of the columns, for which he made specific orders to the Aluminum Company of America (Alcoa). He "did not like the color of standard aluminum, since it was so cold-looking," and had originally planned to use stainless steel that would have cost him more but achieved the look he wanted nonetheless.[41] However, the warm-toned aluminum that Alcoa produced to order for the WTC convinced him to use it. Yamasaki mentioned that he preferred light material because of his "Japanese heritage."[42] Although the materials used for the WTC were completely industrial and modern, he likened their features to the lightness and simplicity of traditional Japanese architecture, exemplified in the aesthetics of the teahouse, which gained currency in the context of modern architecture and postwar U.S.-Japanese cultural exchange. In order to validate his preference for lightness and simplicity, he noted, "Emerson said a plant uses the least material to hold up its structure. That's a real basic thing. You shouldn't use extra material."[43] Referring to both a Japanese architectural manner and an American aesthetic philosophy, Yamasaki emphasized the multicultural inspirations of which he took advantage in his attempt to alleviate the severity of the technological WTC towers and attach artistic values to them. Critics and the general public might not have interpreted the elements of the WTC design that Yamasaki intended to increase the feelings of "warmth" and "lightness," but Yamasaki's point was to

[40] Fred Bruning, "His Baby Stands Tall on Manhattan's Skyline," *Newsday*, September 27, 1973, MYP, box 32, scrapbook.
[41] Yamasaki, *Life in Architecture*, 117.
[42] Bruning, "His Baby Stands Tall."
[43] Ibid.

express his stance against the monotonous looks of orthodox International Style buildings within certain technical and practical constraints.

Another distinctive feature of the WTC where Yamasaki hoped visitors would feel "surprise, serenity, and delight" was its spacious plaza, from which the visitor had a soaring view of the twin towers. The plaza was almost completely enclosed in smaller buildings, except for one area on Church Street that served as a broad entrance. Just like how the Japanese shrine is supposed to be entered through the *torii*-gate from which one would get the front view of the shrine, the WTC was designed to be encountered and seen from the front, which Yamasaki believed was the best way to appreciate the technological beauties of the huge towers.[44]

His visits to Japanese gardens in the mid-1950s had a lasting impact on his space design. It was his experience of surprise and delight in finding the serene and secure space of an enclosed garden off a busy street in a Japanese city that gave him hints for creating the WTC plaza that was almost completely cut off from the outside.[45] The WTC's plaza was intended to be the peaceful and delightful Japanese garden writ large. Yamasaki avoided crowding out the space with too many buildings that would look like "housing projects." Learning his lesson from Pruitt-Igoe and wanting to preclude any association between the two largest projects in his career, Yamasaki was determined to give the WTC a vast space for people to stand back and enjoy the view of the world's tallest towers without feeling overwhelmed by them.[46]

---

[44] Ibid., 96. Subway passengers who would ascend into the plaza directly without using the Church Street entrance did not encounter the towers in the way that Yamasaki envisioned.
[45] Yamasaki, "A Humanist Architecture," 97–98.
[46] In fact, he fondly recounted frequenting the Rockefeller Center Plaza when he used to work for a firm on Manhattan in his younger days. He liked the peaceful and relaxing atmosphere it created for businesspeople and sightseers. While he wanted the WTC plaza to play a similar role, its enclosed nature and its inconvenient access prevented it from becoming a popular destination; the WTC plaza was raised above the ground level, and people had to climb the stairs to enter the plaza from the streets. The Rockefeller plaza, in contrast, was designed in the way that

The WTC design was a result of Yamasaki's effort in supplementing masculine technological exhibitionism with delicateness and serenity that he associated with Japanese architecture. By advocating the importance of "serenity, surprise, and delight," he tried to establish his role of reinstating humane values often neglected in American cityscapes. However, critics generally felt a discord between these opposing elements. The WTC was criticized as gigantism without strength or dignity. Ada Louise Huxtable expressed her concerns about Yamasaki's attempt to incorporate romantic elements in a mega structure like the WTC:

> He has developed a curiously unsettling style, which involves decorative traceries of exotic extraction applied over structure or worked into it. His choice of delicate detail on massive construction as a means of reconciling modern structural scale to the human scale of the viewer is often more disturbing than reassuring. It makes many competent architects go to pieces. Here we have the world's daintiest architecture for the world's biggest buildings."[47]

In particular, Huxtable found a contradiction between the largeness of the building and the delicacy of the "miniature module—3 feet 4 inches—[of the towers]" and the "close grid of their decorative facades."[48] Bert Winther-Tamaki rightly argues that Huxtable's "derisive reproach is the parody of the vestige of Yamasaki's Japanese-inspired anti-monumentalism. His principled opposition to what he had regarded as the oppressive expression of virility by Western architectural monumentality was overwhelmed by the scale inherent in the project which he

---

pedestrians could pass through, which contributed to its lively feeling. Yamasaki, *Life in Architecture*, 115.

[47] Quoted in Winther-Tamaki, "Minoru Yamasaki," 182.

[48] Ada Louise Huxtable, "Big but Not So Bold: Trade Center Towers Are Tallest, But Architecture Is Smaller Scale," *New York Times*, April 5, 1973.

undertook."[49] Moreover, as David Salomon observes, the underlying belief held by Huxtable and other critics that the city should serve as the embodiment of masculine citizenship as opposed to feminine domestic space led to unenthusiastic responses to the WTC which came to be associated with kitsch, gigantism without dignity, and failed seriousness.[50] Thus, critics did not appreciate Yamasaki's challenge to the mechanical and dominant International Style with the use of ideas derived from non-Western architecture, and as a result, his effort was trivialized and feminized.

In the American architectural community, Yamasaki was viewed as an "iconoclastic outsider,"[51] whose ethnic background was also at odds with his peers' Euro-Americanness. Yamasaki tried to draw positive values out of the association between him and Japan that critics and journalists readily made; as mentioned above, he linked his preference for lightness, thinness, and delicateness with his cultural heritage. However, that association emphasized his foreignness and led to critics' judgment that his artistic idiom was not appropriate for demonstrating Western architectural progress and power. One newspaper article described Yamasaki's five-foot, five-inch body as "hurtable [sic], delicate, like his architecture,"[52] connecting the architect's Asian appearance with his supposedly womanly taste at the foundation of his delicate designs. In this way, Yamasaki and his largest project became Othered and marginalized in the discourse of mainstream American modern architecture. Despite the massive spending on its construction, the emasculated project did not find its way into the list of great twentieth-century architecture.

---

[49] Winther-Tamaki, "Minoru Yamasaki," 182.
[50] David Salomon, "One Thing or Another: The World Trade Center and the Implosion of Modernism" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2004), 16–17.
[51] Robins, *The World Trade Center*, 7.
[52] Bruning, "His Baby Stands Tall."

In 1979, as postmodern architecture swept the United States, Huxtable compared Philip Johnson's newly completed Pittsburgh Plate Glass complex with Yamasaki's WTC. She pointed out a resemblance between the two structures' use of Gothic motifs and building arrangements. Then she mentioned, "Perhaps Yamasaki's sin was wrong timing (too Gothic too soon) or not enough real style, or the total absence of wit—the only real sin left in a world where moral judgements have disappeared in life and art."[53] While Huxtable acknowledged Yamasaki's challenges to the dominant International Style, which anticipated a more radical paradigm shift in the age of postmodernism, she pointed out the absence of wit in the WTC, which reduced its possibility to be considered as a precursor to the latter phenomenon. As Angus K. Gillespie rightly argues, "The project was too new to be International Style and too old to be postmodern. It fell between the cracks of the critical establishment."[54]

The WTC's conspicuousness in the Manhattan skyline did not impress critics either. As scholars have pointed out, the twin towers of the WTC were reminiscent of Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Lake Shore Apartments in Chicago (1951). Mies popularized the concept of twin buildings through his successful Lake Shore Apartments where the two towers were in relationship with each other, which helped them to blend into surroundings. Undoubtedly, Yamasaki hoped to achieve the same effect by employing the twin towers for the WTC.[55] However, critics did not see his work in the way Yamasaki saw it. Wolf von Eckardt mentioned, "these incredible giants just stand there, artless and dumb, without any relationship to anything, not even to each other." In the critic's eye, the towers were out of sync with the environment and the existing gracefulness of the Manhattan skyline.

---

[53] Ada Louise Huxtable, "Philip Johnson and the Temper of These Times," *New York Times*, May 13, 1979.
[54] Angus K. Gillespie, *Twin Towers*, 177.
[55] Salomon, "One Thing or Another," 111.

Eckardt's negative response resonated with the anxiety of architects and concerned citizens about the WTC's uprooting of the much beloved historic neighborhood of Manhattan. The concept of urban redevelopment, on which the WTC was founded, itself faced fierce criticism as anti-redevelopment movements such as the one led by the eloquent activist Jane Jacobs gained impetus. In her 1961 *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Jacobs blamed city planners for thinking only in terms of "how cities *ought* to work and what *ought* to be good for people and businesses in them" rather than trying to understand what people truly needed.[56] Jacobs argued that "cities within the city"—self-contained apartment/office towers modeled after Le Corbusier's 1925 Voisin Plan for Paris—as a result of recent redevelopments divided up the city, making superblocks and replacing sidewalks where organic relationships within the community used to form.[57]

Yamasaki's emphasis on the emotional quality of architecture was meant to alleviate the perceived invasive nature of the WTC. In the face of the fundamental questions raised against the purported virtue of the redevelopment project, however, his belief in "surprise, serenity, and delight" was eclipsed. Moreover, despite Yamasaki's effort to humanize the WTC to distinguish it from other corporate buildings, it ironically became the foremost symbol of capitalism and a target of the September 11 attacks because of the very values it represented.

Nonetheless, Yamasaki's name became widely known as a result of the WTC project, and so did his conviction of humanizing American cities. Especially in the Midwest where he was based, Yamasaki maintained his celebrated status as a "people's architect" who went against the grain of modern architecture to reintroduce elegance and variation in buildings and provided

[56] Jane Jacobs, *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 8.
[57] Ibid., 47; Vincent Scully, *American Architecture and Urbanism* (New York: Praeger, 1969), 167–168.

the public with a visual pleasure.[58] Moreover, the WTC did become a tourist attraction and provided the pleasure of surprise to those who encountered the enormous towers in the plaza and enjoyed a spectacular view from the observation deck. Yamasaki was thus at least partly successful in terms of establishing his professional identity as an architect who sought to offer a solace and delight to the general public.

By criticizing American cities that were filled with overwhelming symbols of technological and scientific triumph, Yamasaki attempted to generate his unique standpoint from which he advocated the benefits of the emotional, warm, and humane quality of his architecture. In order to survive the competitive white-dominated architectural world, he strategically formed his professional identity as a Japanese American architect, as someone who looked beyond the formal tradition of Western architecture to bring back the beauty of ancient traditions, even if it made himself vulnerable to being Othered.

**George Nakashima**

Just like Yamasaki, George Nakashima was born to Japanese immigrant parents, grew up in the Pacific Northwest, and studied architecture at the University of Washington. In contrast to how Yamasaki sought to gain a foothold in the American architectural world, though, Nakashima was disillusioned with what he figured poor-quality architecture executed under the American mass-production system after returning from his round-the-world tour in 1940 and turned to woodworking where he could oversee the whole process of design and production from start to finish. His work shared commonalities with early American crafts in its simple lines and

[58] "Yama: The People's Architect," *Magazine of the Detroit News*, October 24, 1982, MYP, box 43, folder 5; Jack Lessenberry, "Minoru Yamasaki: Designs to Serve People," *Toledo Magazine the Sunday Blade*, July 31, 1983, MYP, box 2, folder 15.

forms stripped to essentials, which increased its relevance in the context of postwar American society where nostalgia for a simpler life existed. As the counterculture movement took hold in the 1960s, Nakashima began to emphasize his close link with Asia in legitimatizing his role of demonstrating alternative experiences of modern society through his way of life as well as through his furniture. He effectively used the influence of the mass media to establish his image as a purveyor of the idea that it was possible to live creatively, without completely succumbing to the mass-production system and losing individuality as a result, or denying everything about modernity and the comfort and convenience that consumer society brought to American people's lives. He challenged the conventional exoticization of Asia and suggested that the values he drew from Asian cultures were compatible with the lives of Americans who looked to him for guidance to attain a more fulfilling and satisfying way of life than one dominated by big businesses. An interesting mixture of his spiritual practices and beliefs—Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, and Catholic—functioned to attract a broad audience and made it easy for those who opted out of institutional religion to tap into his spirituality, which was crucial for his success in the age when antiestablishment activities and ideas flourished. Taking advantage of the Japan boom, he actively criticized American values based on materialism and questioned the assumed superiority of American culture.

### *The Orient, Spirituality, and Woodworking*

The seeds of Nakashima's multi-spiritualism were sown in the pre-World War II period. Thanks to his educational background and his father's connections with people in the Japanese architectural world, Nakashima was able to engage in important architectural activities in Japan

and India where he was introduced to Buddhism, Shitoism, and Hinduism.[59] In the early 1930s, he landed a job at Antonin Raymond's architectural firm in Tokyo, which his father had arranged for him through acquaintances. There, Nakashima worked on Frank Lloyd Wright's Imperial Hotel project with future star architects Junzo Yoshimura and Kunio Maekawa. Yoshimura and Maekawa took him to various Buddhist temples and Shinto shrines, which he recounted appreciatively in his autobiography.[60] During his time at the Raymond office, Nakashima was sent to India to build an International Style dormitory for Sri Aurobindo's spiritual community where he later declined to receive a salary and lived as a monk. As international tensions mounted toward the end of the 1930s, he decided to return to the United States by way of Japan where he worked with Maekawa for six months. This early stage of his life as an architect working in Asia and being immersed in local cultures and spiritualisms played a significant part in forming his professional identity later in his career.

American magazine reporters found Nakashima's connection with Asia useful for explaining the features of the woodworker and his furniture. In *Science Illustrated*'s 1948 article titled "George Nakashima: A Designer Who Works by Hand," John Corcoran described how Nakashima worked "by hand with an Oriental's love for the grain of the wood," primarily dealing with non-standardized solid wood and using as little plywood as possible, and produced one-of-a-kind furniture that was in and of itself a form of art. The writer observed that Nakashima's "Oriental heritage" and the use of the "graceful tools of his ancestors" enabled his furniture to have unique characteristics such as "accurate, flexible joints" that were hidden from

[59] Nakashima's father knew people in the Japanese architectural world, which led to Nakashima's acquiring a job at Antonin Raymond's office in Tokyo. Nakashima's father worked as a writer for a Japanese American newspaper in Seattle, so it is possible to assume that he had access to the cultural elite's network in Japan.
[60] George Nakashima, *The Soul*, 58.

the surface.[61] This writer, and others following him, came to underscore the exquisite workmanship that evoked "Oriental" small handicraft as well as the simple, functional form that resonated with early American crafts tradition in distinguishing his work from those of his contemporaries.

His craftsmanship and the "Oriental" tradition it implied were meaningful assets for the United States during the Cold War in that they proved the existence of unique cultural diversity in American society. Nakashima became one of the designers whose works were chosen to be part of the 1951 Museum of Modern Art exhibit, "Design for Use, USA," that later toured Europe to showcase American advancement in the sphere of design. The *New York Times* pointed out that up to this point, there was a general understanding that the absence of "a well-developed craft movement" in the United States despite technical progress "resulted in standardization of American design and frequently in lack of individuality."[62] The exhibit aimed to prove otherwise. The inclusion of the Nakashima furniture contributed to generating the impression that there was a great multicultural tradition of craftsmanship that was uniquely American, and that American culture was not all about mass-production and consumption.[63]

The reputation of his exceptional work and unique background rose higher when he became the first furniture craftsman to receive a Gold Medal from the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1952. The AIA acknowledged that he was an "inheritor of great traditions,"

---

[61] John Corcoran, "George Nakashima: A Designer Who Works by Hand," *Science Illustrated* (1948): 80, 82.
[62] Betty Pepis, "Handcrafts of U.S. in Museum Exhibit: Metropolitan Shows Display to Be Sent on Tour Abroad by State Department," *New York Times*, October 10, 1952.
[63] Gay McDonald, "The 'Advance' of American Postwar Design in Europe: MoMA and the *Design for Use, USA* Exhibition 1951–1953," *Design Issues* 24 (Spring 2008): 15–27.

whose "honest labor" and "original effort" were great inspiration to modern architecture.[64] It was significant that Nakashima received this award, given his sharp criticism of modern architectural practices and designs. Indeed, the reason why he converted from architecture to woodworking was that he did not see a bright future in the direction for which American architecture was headed. After witnessing different forms of cultures and architectures that have developed in a long span of time and continued to inform human lives in various parts of the world, modern houses in California, even ones designed by Wright, seemed vulgar to him. He considered them as examples of "paper architecture," which gave too much weight on designing over a drafting board rather than deeply engaging with actual materials and construction processes and yielded low-quality buildings.[65] The disappointment in American architecture urged him to shift his focus to woodworking in which he could integrate design and construction. The AIA's recognition of the importance of Nakashima's work indicated that it found his criticism relevant when technological progress drastically changed the processes of modern architecture.

Winning the backing of the prestigious organization and confirming his work's relevance to American architecture and culture, he went on to establish his identity as a critical thinker of modern society. Nakashima criticized the "shallowness" of modern design slogans, such as "less is more," "machine for living," and "form follows function," and argued that craftsmen had better look at the earlier examples of "the moss garden and tea house at Sai Ho Ji, the wonders of stone and glass at Chartres, [and] the Dipylon vase" that were "intellectually uncluttered and organically sound."[66] He warned that "the trivial and sensation-seeking" attitude of "art for art's

---

[64] "The Craftsmanship Medal for 1952 to George Nakashima," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (July 1952): 4.
[65] Don Wallance, "George Nakashima," in Don Wallance, *Shaping America's Products* (New York: Reinhold, 1956), 149.
[66] Untitled manuscript, GNPDC, "Writings by Nakashima, undated, 1953."

sake" would lead to a "selfish expression of the ego," which could not "help man toward a better life through ordering our world and its activities."[67] Sharply condemning modern design's estrangement from the daily lives of the general public, Nakashima declared that he would seek to reconnect the two by showing how wooden furniture not only achieved utility but also added the comfort of natural beauty to everyday spaces. He argued that artificial and uniform materials such as plastic and fiberglass were so malleable and easy to handle that they led to designers' arrogance. The choice of wood as his sole medium symbolized his determination to go against the grain of the contemporary furniture industry and establish his unique brand of production.

In fact, for short periods in the 1940s and 1950s, he designed pieces of wooden furniture for mass production by Hans Knoll and Widdicomb-Mueller, but he barely mentioned what this meant for him or how this might have contradicted his philosophy, which indicated the secondary position this experience was given in his own identity as a woodworker. In an interview with Japanese industrial designer Isamu Kenmochi, Nakashima explained how a designer had to come up with new designs constantly in order to be competitive under the Widdicomb-Muller label, which was not consistent with his way of producing furniture with old but good designs.[68] Rather than his connections with big businesses, he emphasized small-scale production and human-centered manufacturing processes at his workshop, which magazine writers fondly called "anachronism" and "one-man war with industrialism."[69] A 1952 *House and Home* article, titled "George Nakashima: His Furniture, His House, His Way of Life," described the unique method and material he employed for making his products:

---

[67] Manuscript for the speech to be delivered at the New York Herald Tribune Forum on October 19, 1953, GNPDC, "Writings by Nakashima, undated, 1953."
[68] "Interview: I Begin with the Wood," *Dezain* 6 (1968): 69.
[69] "George Nakashima: His Furniture, His House, His Way of Life," 82; "After Hours," *Harper's Magazine* (July 1, 1955): 81.

> His furniture is all put together by hand, and is hand finished. It is all wood, solid wood, no veneers. It makes no attempt to symbolize the present by using steel, or plastics, or any other material besides wood, lovingly handled. His native lumber (air dried to retain the depth of the grain) is finished only in rubbed oil, and in contrast to most modern furniture's "marble" finish gives pleasure to the touch, as well as to the eye. Nakashima is the first man, it has been said, to pick up the art of earlier American furniture makers and advance it another step in design, producing a real second generation American craftsmanship.[70]

Thus, the article featured Nakashima's handiwork expressed through natural wood, whose importance was not in the least diminished even when rapid industrialization influenced every aspect of the American way of life. The article celebrated that "a second generation American anachronism of Japanese warrior ancestry" successfully integrated "honest exoticism" with "the art of earlier American furniture makers," taking American craftsmanship to a whole new level.[71] The phrases such as "Japanese warrior ancestry" and "honest exoticism" stamped Nakashima as Oriental, while the favorable characterization of his furniture as "a real second generation American craftsmanship" reflected the general trend toward appreciating the nation's diverse cultural heritage.

The perceived "anachronism" and "one-man war with industrialism" were, as Nakashima himself noted, not totally anti-modern. He chose "to protest against much that is of our age, accepting some of it, and to live creatively to that end."[72] A controlled use of machine was among the things he accepted. He emphasized his determination for adapting to modern

---

[70] "George Nakashima: His Furniture, His House, His Way of Life," 81.
[71] Ibid., 80–81, 86.
[72] Manuscript for the 1953 New York Herald Tribune Forum.

technology as well as for maintaining his preference for decentralization. He did not argue that everyone should go back to nature and seclude themselves from consumer society. Rather, he suggested that adding natural material such as his wooden furniture to one's house could help ease modern uncertainties in which they lived. He was careful enough to suggest what people could incorporate into their current ways of life and avoided proposing a practice or belief that was incompatible with, or require a fundamental change to, the existing order of things.

Through the publicity of his workmanship and lifestyle that epitomized how a man could achieve the independent life that was seemingly free from the stresses and anxieties that commonly plagued the lives of the American working population, Nakashima became a charismatic figure. Edgar J. Kaufmann Jr., director of the Industrial Design Department at the Museum of Modern Art, observed the excitement among those who visited the Nakashima workshop in the mid-1950s:

> Cars crowded the drive, and young householders, children in hand, were walking purposefully between the various buildings, choosing, ordering furniture, urging delivery, and enthusing. The scene—people, buildings, mountain vistas—was saturated in, absorbed by, a mass of brilliant white dogwood, native to the site. What a way to live!—clearly this was as important to Nakashima as designing furniture or of new buildings, and not unimportant to his customers. . . . Here is above all an extension of our present reality beyond the conventional idolization of modernism and mass industrialization for their own sakes.[73]

For the affluent clientele, visiting the workshop and meeting the master woodworker who had a spiritually fulfilling life and work in the countryside of Pennsylvania let them live his life

[73] Edgar J. Kaufmann Jr., "Nakashima, American Craftsman," *Arts in America* (December 1955): 31–32.

vicariously and visualize what an alternative way of life—being away from the city and maintaining independence from the mass-production system—could look like. Even if they could not realistically abandon their lifestyle in the city, choosing the Nakashima furniture over easily accessible mass-produced commodities let his customers express their individualism, good taste, and status.

### *Free-Edge Tables and the Counterculture Movement*

Nakashima effectively integrated his work and philosophy in questioning the dominance of technology and the destruction of nature. His attitude of respecting the beauty of nature most prominently manifested itself in a series of his free-edge tables—arguably the most highly acclaimed of all of Nakashima's works. He began making free-edge coffee tables in the late 1940s. Normally, logs for tabletops were squared up and processed into a standardized shape, but Nakashima made it his goal to let wood retain its natural beauty and avoid imposing a form on it; in the words of one writer, "He [was] merely a participant in the design process."[74] The resulting organic shape of these wooden products contrasted strikingly with the contemporary mass-produced furniture that was made of standardized, artificially created materials, which helped distinguish the woodworker's artistry in the field of furniture making.

Moreover, Nakashima became a pioneer in using logs that included knots and cracks for tabletops—the practice which went against the grain of the furniture industry that prioritized functionality.[75] Furniture makers usually rejected logs with irregular traits, but Nakashima

---

[74] Robert Perron, "George Nakashima: An Artist Who Makes Tables and Chairs," *Decorating a House and Garden Guide* (Fall/Winter 1976–1977), GNPDC, "Printed material, magazine clippings, undated, 1955-57, 1973, 1977, 1981-1990."
[75] Judith Miller, *20th Century Design: The Definitive Illustrated Sourcebook* (London: Miller's, 2009), 33.

appreciated individualities of wood and prided himself on "giving a second life" to rejects.[76] Some of the planks that Nakashima turned into tables had so many holes that they served more as pieces of sculpture than functional objects to eat or write on. The butterfly joints he used to reinforce natural splits became the hallmark of his tables.[77]

Nakashima's interest in using logs with "defects" developed as he solidified his reputation and began to stress his "race" as Japanese in his professional identity as a woodworker. He had already talked about Japan as a source of inspiration prior to this point, but as he revisited India and Japan in the mid-1960s and established workshops there, he began to assert a more essential connection between himself and Asia. He often referred to his *samurai* ancestry and his mother's experience in working in the Meiji Imperial Court, creating his image as someone who was of authentic lineage for understanding and utilizing knowledge derived from Japan.[78] Nakashima repeatedly mentioned that his love of wood might be "racial" and pointed out that the Japanese were accustomed to living with nature, "instead of conquering it."[79] He implicitly criticized Western civilization based on industrialization that saw nature as an object of manipulation. He noted, "In Japan there is a reverence for wood and a gentleness toward nature that we don't have here in the West."[80] He appreciated the Shinto tradition that attributed sacredness to the tree and related his woodworking practice to it. As early as 1941 he had

[76] Mira Nakashima, *Nature, Form and Spirit*, 7.
[77] Miller, *20th Century Design*, 38.
[78] Miriam Plotnicov, "A Way To Be Free: Nakashima's Life," *Smithonian Magazine* (September 1972): 62–3, GNPPA, Box 1, Folder 10; Yuichiro Kojiro, "George Nakashima: sekai no bokusho o tazunete" [A visit with a world famous woodworker, George Nakashima], *Katei gaho* (September 1978): 120.
[79] "Craftsman at Work," *New York Herald Tribune*, Today's Living, February 11, 1962; Manuscript for the 1953 New York Herald Tribune Forum.
[80] "The Craftsman: Fulfilling Our Need and Nostalgia for Wood," *Life* (July 6, 1970): 62.

mentioned, "The true craftsman passes his hand over the wood and finds God within."[81] He continued to locate spiritual meaning in woodworking so that his work would cater to those who looked for more than superficial and materialistic values. His free-edge tables most effectively represented his respect for nature and his will to go against the conventional practice of disregarding the material's natural beauty for the sake of mass production.

The press underscored Nakashima's Eastern philosophy and his almost religious appeal to those who were susceptible to alternative values and equipped with high disposable income. In this context, Nakashima was represented as what Jane Naomi Iwamura calls the "Oriental Monk," whose most prominent examples are D. T. Suzuki and Dalai Lama. According to Iwamura, the Oriental Monk epitomizes "an otherworldly spirituality" that evokes "ancient Eastern civilization and culture."[82] She argues that the Oriental Monk in the American media is defined by "his spiritual commitment, his calm demeanor, his Asian face, his manner of dress, and—most obviously—his peculiar gendered character."[83] The "peculiar gendered character" is encapsulated in his representation as an individual without a visible family or community. Nakashima did not quite fit into this part of the definition, since he often appeared with his family in the media. Nakashima's masculine identity as the head of a family-operated workshop was more in line with the accepted norms of American gender roles than the peculiarity of the Oriental Monk. Nevertheless, there were many similarities between how he and the Asian religious figures were represented in the media. For example, journalists readily attributed Asianness to Nakashima's diction and appearance; he was characterized with "a very gentle

[81] George Nakashima, "A Feeling for Material," *California Arts and Architecture* (1941): 30–31, GNPDC, "Printed material, magazine clippings, undated, 1955-57, 1973, 1977, 1981-1990."
[82] Jane Naomi Iwamura, *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.
[83] Ibid.

voice" and modest manner, had an Asian face ("heavy cheeks and eyes"), and often wore *hanten* (Japanese short work coat geared toward craftsmen)—instead of a pair of overalls that he used to wear in the WRA's photos.[84] Both Nakashima and the Asian religious figures were represented as being independent from an anonymous "horde" of Asian immigrants whom nativists targeted for exclusion after the reform of immigration and naturalization laws in 1965. Thus, neither of them posed a threat to the existing dominant way of life. Nakashima took advantage of his "Oriental Monk" type of representations, promoting his scarcity value as a woodworker with "authentic" Japanese skills. He successfully developed his niche market by responding to the demands of the counterculture movement.

Especially in the context of the growing popularity of Zen Buddhism in artist circles and beyond, knowledge in Asian values and aesthetics served as strengths for modern cultural producers. Nakashima's artistic philosophy met the increasing demand for translators of Asian spirituality among many fellow artists and the middle- and high-class clientele. In this cultural climate, Nakashima was able to express his inclination for spirituality, and it occasionally became the central focus of the media narrative about the woodworker. A magazine reporter mentioned that when he visited Nakashima's showrooms and workshops in the woods of New Hope with those who craved for Nakashima's "cult articles," he felt as if he was entering "the grounds of a religious community."[85] A 1970 *Life* magazine article featured Nakashima's prewar experience of rejecting materialism altogether and living as a Hindu monk for two years at an ashram in India. Nakashima was quoted as stating, "I have always been interested in meditation

[84] "George Nakashima: His Furniture, His House, His Way of Life"; Joseph M. Michenfelder, "Artist Who Works with Wood," *Maryknoll* (March 1960), 5, GNPPA, box 9.
[85] Andrew Ellis, "Bucks County's George Nakashima: Serene and Simple Furniture from a Troubled and Complex Man," *Sunday Bulletin Magazine* (January 28, 1968): 8–9, GNPPA, box 9.

and mysticism. . . . I think I've always been that kind of seeker."[86] In a 1974 *Today* article, Nakashima mentioned that it was an ashram which led him to find "the inner peace" he had been searching all his life. "In many ways, I was like the hippies of today," Nakashima contended, "I had the same feelings about the chicanery, the corruption, the moral bankruptcy of the modern world." Nakashima pointed out the youth problem of not "channel[ing] their dissatisfactions in constructive ways" like he did through woodworking. Connecting his monastic life with his current practice of "carving out my own environment and building my own way of life" in Bucks County, New Hope, he implied the importance and relevance of his craftsmanship in the modern American context, while associating himself with seekers and hippies.[87] *Smithsonian* magazine noted, "to some, seeking a living pattern closer to basic truths, his way of life is more important than his furniture—and he would certainly agree."[88] Nakashima hoped that seekers, hippies, and many others who found the existing social order suffocating and sought ways to be free from it would find his example of living close to nature enlightening and valuable in the age that called for diversity.

Nakashima's nonwhite cultural identity worked in his favor against a backdrop of the counterculture movement and ethnic revivalism that gained a stronghold in American society's move toward the Civil Rights era. Matthew Jacobson argues that ethnic revivalism was closely linked with the American public's vague anxiety toward homogenization and overspecialization of many aspects of life that seemed to threaten individuality, which was part of the fundamental tenets of the American democratic ideology. Jacobson mentions that an "impetus to ethnic revival was a powerful current of antimodernism, the broadly accepted notion that ethnicity

[86] "The Craftsman: Fulfilling Our Need and Nostalgia for Wood," 61.
[87] Paul Taylor, "Nakashima's Secret for Riches and Happiness," *Today* (February 17, 1974): 26, GNPPA, box 9.
[88] Plotnicov, "A Way To Be Free," 62.

represented a haven of authenticity that existed at a remove from the bloodless, homogenizing forces of mass production and consumption, mass media, commodification, bureaucratization, and suburbanization."[89] Nakashima was keenly aware of this problem of over-specialization and compartmentalization that came with the mass-production system that had far greater influence on society than one could have ever imagined: "Specialization is frustration unless it broadens into largeness, into relativity. It is the same pitfall which affects, not only design, but all the phases of human activity from medicine to diplomacy."[90] In this context, Nakashima's professionalism and furniture offered a way of retaining individuality for the producer and the consumer, cultural diversity, and appreciation of nature—an alternative to being passively enforced to adapt to modern corporate and mass-consumerist practices.

Nakashima's professional identity, which combined his multicultural spiritualism and his individualistic work ethic, met the demand for an example of leading a life not dominated by governmental, institutional, and market principles. While Nakashima hoped to maintain a certain distance from consumerism, his operation was dependent on "lifestyle consumerism" that his middle- and high-class customers practiced, through which they expressed "individual ethos" and exerted "privatized choices" to form their identity.[91] Being aware of the growing interest in diversity, Nakashima skillfully constructed the narrative of his experiences in Western and Eastern cultural spheres to establish his original method and position in the field of furniture

---

[89] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 22–23.
[90] Eddie Shimano, "Designed for Living: George Nakashima Handcrafts a House in Pennsylvania," *Scene the Pictorial Magazine* 2, no. 1 (May 1950): 34, accessed on August 14, 2015, http://ddr.densho.org/ddr/densho/266/18/files/?page=2.
[91] Eileen Luhr, "Seeker, Surfer, Yogi: The Progressive Religious Imagination and the Cultural Politics of Place in Encinitas, California," *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 2015): 1170–1171; Sarah Banet-Weiser, *AuthenticTM: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), 176, quoted in Luhr, "Seeker, Surfer, Yogi."

making, advocating the use of natural wood in furnishing home in order to retain warmth, humane feeling, and individuality that could not be achieved with standardized, scientifically produced material.

**Isamu Noguchi**

In 1949, Isamu Noguchi wrote two seminal essays on the social roles of sculpture and the sculptor. "Towards a Reintegration of the Arts" and "Meaning in Modern Sculpture" explored both the formidable challenges and the opportunities that the world presented to him and his fellow artists. In language evocative of Marxism, Noguchi pointed out that the "blight of industrialism has pushed man into a specialized corner, and more and more he is assuming the role of spectator" rather than exerting his own creativity.[92] Noguchi deplored that this, along with man's precarious existence exacerbated by "Buchenwald and impending cataclysms," caused the "whole man" to become the "fragmented self."[93] Having laid out these problems, Noguchi suggested that the sculptor could become useful in modern society to demonstrate and stimulate man's imagination and to reemphasize the importance of the "poetic and artistic" side of human lives when human experiences were increasingly defined by the overwhelming power of mechanization.[94] Noguchi argued that sculpture could play a significant role "as the art of order—the harmonizer and humanizer of spaces" when people found it difficult to relate to the very environment they had created.[95]

---

[92] Isamu Noguchi, "Towards a Reintegration of the Arts" (1949), in *Isamu Noguchi: Essays and Conversations*, edited by Diane Apostolos-Cappadona and Bruce Altshuler (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994), 28.
[93] Isamu Noguchi, "Meaning in Modern Sculpture" (1949), in *Isamu Noguchi: Essays and Conversations*, 33.
[94] Noguchi, "Towards a Reintegration of the Arts," 31.
[95] Ibid.

Needing to think further about possible solutions to counter the problems the United States faced, he applied for the Bollingen Foundation fellowship to travel abroad and survey contemporary situations in other cultures. The Bollingen Foundation was established by a disciple of Carl G. Jung. Jung was a Swiss psychologist whose concept of the "collective unconscious" became widely influential among modern artists, who wished to translate the universal, primordial, and bare emotion of human being into their works.[96] Jung wrote the foreword to Daisetz Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism* published in 1949, in which he pointed out the importance of the idea of unconsciousness in Zen. Thus, he played a key role in promoting the relevance of Zen to Western artists. The Bollingen Foundation, influenced by Jung's theory, encouraged studies in Oriental cultures among other things. Noguchi was indeed willing to learn from non-Western cultures in which the integration of life and art was maintained, he believed, unlike in the highly capitalized United States where art was enshrined in museums and became a commodity of wealthy patrons rather than a communal asset of the general public.[97] Noguchi's and the Bollingen Foundation's interests converged, and he was awarded the fellowship. Noguchi's receiving of the Bollingen Foundation fellowship happened in the context of Western societies' increasing attention to non-Western cultures and values. Noguchi was a perfect candidate for the fellowship because he was well read in Japanese art and philosophy; he had read Bruno Taut's landmark book on the reevaluation of Japanese traditional aesthetics in the context of modernism and Suzuki's writings on Zen Buddhism before his

[96] Belgrad, *Culture of Spontaneity*, 10.
[97] Bert Winther-Tamaki, "The Ceramic Art of Isamu Noguchi: A Close Embrace of the Earth," in *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics: A Close Embrace of the Earth*, eds. Louise Allison Cort and Bert Winther-Tamaki (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 29.

travel.[98] These laid critical foundation on which Noguchi would develop his understanding on aesthetic traditions in Japan.

It is clear from Noguchi's writings and interviews that his stay in his ancestral country in the early 1950s—the last leg of his travel (after France and India) on the fellowship—had the largest influence on the subsequent development of his professional identity. Of all things he encountered in Japan, the most lasting impact on his work came from traditional Japanese gardens; he repeatedly recounted his visits to Ryoanji, Shisendo, and the Katsura Detached Palace. He was especially impressed by how the carefully calculated deployment of trees, stones, and gravel at Ryoanji enabled a relatively small area to have a sense of infinitely expansive space. This gave him the idea of "sculpturing of space"—giving meaning to space through the placement of sculpture (be it "natural sculpture" such as a tree and a stone or a man-made object)—the concept which he thought useful for the betterment of American cityscapes where congestion and chaos predominated. The collaborative project with the highly successful architect Gordon Bunshaft in the 1950s and 1960s gave Noguchi an opportunity to apply the idea he developed in Japan to American cityscapes. The sunken garden he designed for the plaza of the Chase Manhattan Bank, in particular, epitomized both his desire to claim the knowledge of Japan's old tradition and his will to use stones in a completely new way to transform the atmosphere in the heart of Wall Street. Through his sunken garden, he aimed to highlight the poetic aspect of his work, which he believed could supplement the modern and functional environment where materialism tended to overwhelm other aspects of human lives. Like Yamasaki and Nakashima, Noguchi took advantage of his ancestral ties with Japan to establish his unique standpoint as a cultural critic.

---

[98] Bruno Taut, *Houses and People of Japan* (Tokyo: Sanseido, 1937); D. T. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture* (Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, 1938).

***Art and Society***

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, Noguchi worked with Gordon Bunshaft of the Skidmore, Owings & Merrill on various projects, through which he improved his skills on space design. Having taste in sculpture, Bunshaft chose Noguchi as his partner on many of his corporate architectures. In his autobiography, Noguchi thanked Bunshaft for making possible a productive collaboration: "It is due to his interest that projects were initiated, his persistence that saw them realized, his determination that squeezed out whatever was in me."[99] In return, Bunshaft lavished praise on Noguchi's rare talent that made significant contributions to his projects: "He is one of the few artists in this country who have a sense of architectural space."[100] The amicable feeling that developed between Noguchi and Bunshaft represents the rare harmony of sculpture and architecture that they proved possible.

One of the most remarkable among their collaborations was the design of the sunken garden for the Chase Manhattan Bank. Having worked with Bunshaft in the 1950s on a plan for a garden and ground floor of the Lever Brothers Building in New York (unrealized) and on the design of gardens for Connecticut General Insurance Company, Noguchi was invited to serve as a consultant in the design of a new plaza for the Chase building. In 1960, Noguchi learned that some artists had been asked to submit models for a sculpture to be placed in the new plaza. He was upset because he felt he should be considered a candidate as well, since he had been involved all along in the planning as a consultant. He complained and talked the project owner into accepting his submission. The project owner had one request for Noguchi—that he would make his studies without any fee. Noguchi agreed and declared that he would not charge for any preliminary studies for this proposal or any other ones he would submit to the company in the

[99] Isamu Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 172.
[100] Quoted in David L. Shirley, "Noguchi," *Newsweek* 29 (April 1968): 95.

future. Noguchi made ten studies, but unfortunately none of them was selected. Successfully promoting himself as a budget-friendly artist, though, Noguchi moved the company to have him make studies for a sunken garden, which he as a consultant had suggested earlier for the plaza.[101]

Unlike Yamasaki and Nakashima who rationalized their works by vociferously criticizing the homogenized cityscape, Noguchi found his opportunity to make a big impact on society in collaborating with an architectural company that specialized in building glass-and-steel office skyscrapers—embodiments of mass-production and technology—for his "sculpturing of space." While some of his contemporaries satirized Noguchi as a commercial artist because of his collaboration with Bunshaft, Noguchi believed that it was more important for the artist to provide an art that was in a meaningful relationship to its surroundings and existing social reality—since art could not exist independently from the political and economic situation it is in—than to work as a "pure" or self-absorbed artist and advocate "art for art's sake." He mentioned, the "complete artist" would want to break all limits, including those that separated the fields of architecture and sculpture, rather than to stick to their traditional place and status quo.[102]

He became increasingly attracted to the idea that sculpture could play a larger social role as the circumstances surrounding artists drastically changed in the postwar United States. In his two 1949 essays, Noguchi pointed out that a piece of sculpture had "less significance" if it became "individual possession," compared to it being available for "public enjoyment."[103] In his article titled "The Complete Artist" written around 1960, similar concerns were repeated. This

---

[101] Martin L. Friedman, *Noguchi's Imaginary Landscapes: An Exhibition* (Minneapolis: The Center, 1978), 61.
[102] Noguchi, "The Complete Artist" (c. 1960), in *Isamu Noguchi: Essays and Conversations*, 48.
[103] Noguchi, "Towards a Reintegration of the Arts," 26; Noguchi, "Meaning in Modern Sculpture," 36.

time, Noguchi suggested that some artists were partly to blame for the situation. He deplored that some artists seemed to be content with their works being bought for decorations and "be paid like a businessman," and not "seeking the furthest implications of his art." With capitalistic disciplines dominating human lives in American society, he mentioned, "the role of the artist as a revolutionary is . . . now being replaced by his role as a technician and specialist."[104] In Noguchi's eyes, many artists were tamed in postwar economic prosperity and were happily enjoying their lucrative occupation. Noguchi strongly believed that there were other ways for artists to become useful than just to provide commodities to the wealthy clientele.

Although he criticized artists whose goals became inventing a salable style rather than expanding their horizons, he did not believe that capitalism and materialism had only negative influences on artists either. The postwar modern art world became so intertwined with the marketplace and materialism—especially compared to the situation during the Depression era when advancing art and ensuring the well-being of artists was a social project—that many felt the necessity to accept some conditions of the reality and find a respectable place for themselves, rather than opt out of art production in consumerist society altogether.[105] As a matter of fact, it was private businesses that had strong financial power and interest to fund artistic activities in the postwar era, and it was materialism that laid the foundation for middle classes' growing interest in art in general. The influential part the Rockefellers played in establishing and administering the Museum of Modern Art was the best example of how wealthy individuals had become indispensable supporters of American art. Francis Frascina points out that unlike France and Italy in the wake of World War II, a strong Communist party did not come into power in the

[104] Noguchi, "The Complete Artist," 44, 47–8.
[105] Francis Frascina, "The Politics of Representation," in *Modernism in Dispute: Art since the Forties*, eds. Paul Wood, Francis Frascina, Jonathan Harris, and Charles Harrison (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 143.

United States because such option was "circumscribed by a combination of neo-conservatism (policed, for instance, by the Committee on Un-American Activities, which was anti-Communist) and the economic and ideological interests of a country whose industrial base was able to move from a war footing to a promise of almost endless consumerism."[106] Many artists, including Noguchi, figured that it was through collaboration with capitalists that art could make the biggest impact on society. As Bruce Altshuler mentions, Noguchi's long-held desire to have his sculpture perform a larger role in society was to "be realized only under the corporate capitalist boom of the 1950s and 1960s."[107] Noguchi argued that freedom of expression, so essential for the advancement of art, was in jeopardy, as "half the world is in darkness."[108] Noguchi's Marxist thoughts, prevalent in the 1949 essays, were tamed, and the cause to fight against unfreedom—under the banner of American democracy and freedom—seemed to justify the artist's reconciliation with the bourgeoisie, at least to some extent.

***"My Ryūanji"***

When one stands by the sunken garden in the Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza, one may be struck by the contrast between the natural stones in various sizes and shapes placed in the well and the artificial steel-and-glass corporate tower that looms over it. The polarization of "nature" and "non-nature" may well be the impression that a passerby gets while glancing down and over from the plaza. However, an examination of Noguchi's essays written around the time of his commitment in this project reveals that the sculptor had a grander purpose than merely bringing nature into the heart of Wall Street—where skyscrapers proudly rise as manifestations of

[106] Ibid.
[107] Bruce Altshuler, *Isamu Noguchi* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1994), 25.
[108] Noguchi, "Meaning in Modern Sculpture," 36.

technology and economic power—to provide an otherworldly space that stands out from the rest. What he sought to accomplish through this work was to prove the point he made about sculpture earlier—that sculpture could perform an important role as "the art of order" and as "the harmonizer and humanizer of spaces." He was more concerned to showcase how sculpture could *relate* to its environment and give rise to new meanings for the space with which it engaged than to demonstrate its own intrinsic quality.

For this project, Noguchi needed Japanese rocks in order to realize, as he called it, "My Ryūanji."[109] Even before his proposal for the sunken garden was approved, he went to Japan to obtain rocks from the Uji River in Kyoto.[110] Noguchi emphasized the importance of the "selection and placement" of stones in the making of a sculptural garden. In other words, he said, "It is the point of view that sanctifies."[111] Beautiful stones themselves were not enough to realize a sculptural garden; they needed a garden designer who had sophisticated eyes to know where each of them should be positioned to elevate them to the level of sanctity. While his stay in Japan on the Bollingen fellowship, he visited famous temples and gardens with Saburo Hasegawa, a modern artist well-versed in Japanese traditional culture. As Hasegawa reported, Noguchi appeared with his Leica camera, equipped with wide-angle and zoom lenses, and his Japanese paper, pen, ink, and ink stone wrapped in a cloth and tucked under his arm whenever they met for field trips.[112] Clearly, Noguchi sought to understand the methods employed in traditional Japanese gardens in order to strengthen the foundation for his own creative activities. At the same time, by bravely calling his work "My Ryūanji," he implicitly asserted that he, an

---

[109] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 171. The temple, with its world famous stone garden, is generally known as "Ryoanji." Noguchi perhaps misread the kanji.
[110] Friedman, *Noguchi's Imaginary Landscapes*, 61.
[111] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 39.
[112] Saburo Hasegawa, "Isamu Noguchi tono hibi" ["Days with Isamu Noguchi"], *Sansai* (August 1950): 7–9.

American artist whose artistic idioms clearly developed within the context of modernism, could also possess a point of view that sanctified his stones, his garden as a whole, and the space around it. It was a manifestation both of his cultural and ethnic ties to Japan and of identity as an American artist.

In an article published soon after the completion of the Chase garden, Noguchi described the meaning he imbued with it:

> The chief feature of this Garden is the use of rocks in a non-traditional way. Instead of being a part of the earth they burst forth, seeming to levitate out of the ground (at least that is the intention). The ground itself is contoured; it is man-made, that is—it is sculpture. The concentric patterns of the paving may be said to be like the contour raking of Japanese gardens, but they go back more to their Chinese origins of stylized sea waves. The rocks which here become the sculptures are natural. There is this transposition: an unnatural thing of will, as is our whole technological age—like going to the moon.[113]

While he associated his garden to Kyoto's Ryoanji, Noguchi indicated that his garden should not be seen as an imitation. In contrast to his UNESCO garden which was "a study, and a tribute" to Japan, the Chase garden is "an utterly modern garden" with rocks used as "an element of sculptural composition."[114] Noguchi's stones "burst forth," unlike the stones at Ryoanji that seem to be firmly rooted in raked white gravel, like islands in a calm sea. Noguchi's garden, with water flowing in during summer, is "a turbulent seascape from which immobile rocks take off for outer space."[115] Thus, as Noguchi stated in the description of the garden, his emphasis was on the "non-traditional way" of using rocks.

---

[113] Isamu Noguchi, "New Stone Gardens," *Art in America* 52 (June 1964): 89.
[114] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 171.
[115] Noguchi, "New Stone Gardens," 89.

Emphasizing the "utterly modern" and "non-traditional" quality of his garden, Noguchi suggested that Japan was not the only place he wanted the garden to be associated with. His tracing the inspiration for the concentric patterns of the paving to Chinese origins can be seen as his rejection to be connected only with Japan, by which he suggested that he was not necessarily trying to take advantage of the popularity of things Japanese by disguising his work as one. Also inferred here is his challenge to the Japanese ownership over the uniqueness and novelty of the Japanese garden. He suggested that traditions influenced and were related to each other, rather than being a self-contained and "pure" entity. This could be seen as his attempt to liberate the Japanese garden from what Bert Winther-Tamaki calls "artistic nationalism."[116] Noguchi's intention was not to provide a "Japanese" garden to Wall Street. Neither was it to merely transplant "nature" or present stones as something inherently opposite of or inassimilable to the cityscape filled with skyscrapers. He envisioned "the sort of counterpoint of building and sculpture whereby they relate."[117] Noguchi further noted, "The origin of [the Chase garden] may be said to be Japan. I like to think, however, that its link is more to a distant star."[118] He suggested that "Exploding Universe" could be a possible title of this "total sculpture." Explaining his rationale for the title, he mentioned, "We live in an expanding universe; we're going to the moon. I've built a moonscape."[119] From the allusion to the space age, one can read into Noguchi's intention to make his sculptural work relevant to the socio-cultural milieu of the 1960s United States in which it existed, and not something irreconcilable with the towering manifestation of technology that stands by its side.

---

[116] Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations*, esp. introduction.
[117] Isamu Noguchi, "The Sculptor and the Architect" (c. 1968), in *Isamu Noguchi: Essays and Conversations*, 53.
[118] Quoted in Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations*, 166.
[119] "Total Sculpture," *New Yorker* (December 14, 1963): 46.

Noguchi believed that if sculpture was "properly scaled in a space" and effectively functioned as a counterpoint to architecture, it created a greater space.[120] This greater space, "a dimension of the infinite," was illusionist, and was realized through the viewer's imagination.[121] Sculpture's "proper scale" was not necessarily realized through making it as big as the architecture it engaged with. More important than the physical size was sculptural components' relative scale to each other and how they as a whole enabled an imaginative expanse of space that added a new meaning to itself. Moreover, Noguchi said, "If sculpture is the rock, it is also the space between rocks and between the rock and a man, and the communication and contemplation between."[122] Thus, Noguchi introduced the viewer as an important agent in the creation of the space. Noguchi found it crucial to give agency to people who could be diminished by the impersonal surroundings and skyscrapers that were out of scale with them.

Noguchi advocated the potentially significant role of the artist in supplying "the poetic and artistic meaning of our existence" in which "man may find surcease from mechanization in the contemplation and enjoyment of a new spiritual freedom."[123] He argued that modern-day progress brought about convenience but was taking a toll on other aspects of human life and that a new art was responsible for supplementing and compensating what was being lost.[124] Moreover, he believed that his stone sculpture in particular could function as an "antidote to impermanence" in the fast changing reality.[125] Through these statements, Noguchi actively sought to establish his professional identity as an artist who produced socially meaningful sculptures that were intended

---

[120] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 160.
[121] Ibid., 161.
[122] Noguchi, "Meaning in Modern Sculpture," 35.
[123] Noguchi, "Towards a Reintegration of the Arts," 36.
[124] Yoshiro Taniguchi, "Bijutsu no atarashii kaitakusha" ["A New Pioneer of Art"] *Sekai bijutsu zenshu geppo* 1 (June 1950): 19–20, Noguchi Room Resources, Keio University Art Center, Tokyo, NOG/NOG-C1, series 2 (hereafter referred to as KUAC).
[125] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 40.

to recover human dignity and offer an opportunity to reflect on "progress," the extent of which was gauged often exclusively by scientific standards.

**Conclusion**

Yamasaki, Nakashima, and Noguchi pointed out that urban cities, filled with monotonous, severe buildings, were not in a meaningful relationship with their people. Arguing that the importance of the emotional, spiritual, and poetic dimension of life tended to be overlooked, they proclaimed themselves to be able to offer correctives to the situation. They hoped to promote diversity in American design and culture through rectifying the dominance of planer geometric styles best exemplified in the International Style and Bauhaus. Their experiences of traveling to various parts of the world, especially to Japan, allowed them to claim artistic and architectural philosophies that broke the limits of Western tradition.

Whereas Nakashima and Noguchi could take advantage of their ethnic and cultural ties to Japan in establishing their artistic identity, Yamasaki had to be careful not to let the "Japaneseness," which critics readily located in his work, dominate his image as an architect; since architecture was a discipline whose advancement was dependent on rigorous scientific research for technological progress and innovative engineering, an excessive association with premodern and non-Western imagery such as Japanese tradition was to be avoided. His priority to stay within the boundaries of American architectural tradition at times limited his challenges to modernist conventions. Albeit this difference, the three men's projects examined in this chapter served as important conduits through which they could assert unique professional identities as Nisei cultural producers.

## Chapter 3
## Blueprints for New Designs:
## Japanese American Cultural Ambassadorship during the Cold War

In the 1950s, Nisei architect Minoru Yamasaki (1912–86) and artist Isamu Noguchi (1904–88) traveled abroad for projects that propelled their careers. The U.S. State Department sent Yamasaki to Kobe, Japan, in 1954 to design a new U.S. consulate building that would symbolize friendship between the two countries. Meanwhile, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) commissioned Noguchi to design a Japanese garden—and pay homage to Japan—for its new headquarters in Paris in 1956. Yamasaki and Noguchi were in charge of representing cultural harmony between East and West, the discursively constructed worlds of different sociocultural systems and peoples, and to perform as goodwill ambassadors to promote understanding between them. In this chapter, I examine how Yamasaki and Noguchi visually expressed East-West harmony through their projects during the Cold War era while taking advantage of the opportunities of being abroad to expand their horizons and establish their unique standpoints from which they challenged the assumptions of the white-dominated professional fields in which they worked.

The 1950s saw a proliferation of programs, organized by the United States and its European allies, which encouraged cultural exchange between them and their former enemies and colonial subjects in Asia. Laura Elizabeth Wong demonstrates how UNESCO's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values was organized in 1957 to increase mutual understanding between East and West; Christina Klein points out that the federal government's East-West Center, launched in 1959 upon Hawai'i's statehood, "promoted both cultural policies of integration and military policies of containment," which aimed to bring Asia-

Pacific nations to stand on the U.S. side in its battle against communism.[1] The imaginary East-West binary engendered throughout these critical years helped gloss over tensions that existed within the "East"—especially those between the former colonizer Japan and the victims of its aggression—and create the narrative of "Asians" and Westerners ultimately achieving reconciliation, harmony, and coexistence.

In an effort to advocate mutual acceptance of the two worlds, Japan loomed large as the poster child of the East from the point of view of the United States and its allies that sought to bring the East into the democratic camp of Cold War geopolitics.[2] They regarded Japan's incorporation into capitalism and rapid economic recovery as a symbol of the positive consequences of a democratic East-West alliance. As Japan became an important collaborator in building a postwar world order, the eastward cultural flow from Japan increased. By the mid-1950s Japanese art made its presence felt in New York, which had replaced Paris as the cultural capital of the world. As Klein argues, American middlebrow cultural texts such as magazines, travel writings, and musicals about Asia in the postwar period helped the American audience feel sympathetic toward Asians and to engage in the shaping of Cold War Orientalism—the U.S. public's paternalistic desire to preserve the cultures of the East—which played a significant role in constructing America's postwar identity as a liberal democratic society.[3] Japan's inclusion into dominant political and economic systems as the junior ally of the United States ensured the preservation of certain forms of Japanese arts and culture under the hegemonic power of the United States.

---

[1] Laura Elizabeth Wong, "Cultural Agency: UNESCO's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values, 1957–1966" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 2006), 64; Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 244.
[2] Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally*.
[3] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism*, 8–9.

Cold War rhetoric on creating a better world under U.S. guidance, however, met with the growing decolonization movement that captured the world's attention through various events including the 1955 Asian-African Conference at Bandung. While on the surface the goal of achieving East-West cultural exchange might have appeared to be benign cultural pluralism, power and leadership clearly rested in the hands of the Euro-American group rather than distributed equally among all interested groups. With political tensions mounting, there was demand for cultural ambassadors who could represent a cordial relationship between different cultural and ethnic elements and mitigate the impression that the "harmony" was defined and coordinated in the way the privileged group of the international community preferred. Yamasaki and Noguchi, who embodied cultural and ethnic hybridity, were a perfect fit for the role.

Although Cold War racial liberalism, which denied biologically determined racial hierarchies, won acceptance among many on the left and the right alike as a remedy to counteract the Soviet's accusations of U.S. racism, stereotypical views about minorities were still pervasive.[4] Japanese Americans, immigrant and native-born, were expected to have permanent cultural ties to their "homeland," which stood on the assumption that they ultimately belonged to Japan and not to the United States. While Japanese "traditional" arts and culture were constantly in transformation, Cold War Orientalism reinforced their image as remnants of the past that retained non-Western authenticity. Yamasaki and Noguchi navigated the expectations of representing an authentic Japan, occasionally defying the notion that nonwhite bodies were the repositories of exotic spiritualities and primitive values, and strategically creating space for themselves where they could claim their own subjectivity rather than being assimilated into the homogenized Other.

[4] Wu, *The Color of Success*, 4.

**Japanese American Cultural Ambassadors**

As Serge Guilbaut and Penny M. Von Eschen demonstrate, early Cold War presidents actively used cultures as forms of soft power.[5] Avant-garde paintings and jazz were exported as symbols of American freedom and democracy. Similarly, Yamasaki and Noguchi's ambassadorial projects were organized with the intention of spreading the notion about American society as liberal, individualistic, and democratic as opposed to what anticommunists defined as the Soviet Union's oppressive and collective social system.

While the Nisei's projects fit within the larger movement of Cold War cultural diplomacy, the nature of their architectural work possessed some striking differences from that of paintings and jazz. In contrast to how liveliness and spontaneity were fundamental features of avant-garde action paintings and jazz performances, the Nisei's architectural projects were based on detailed planning to ensure precision and coherence. Their projects were supposed to serve as monuments of peace under democracy on which the United States and its European allies based their legitimacy to lead the world. These symbolic sites continuously reinforced the power of the Euro-American democratic coalition in local and global contexts, influencing the subjectivity and worldview of those who learned about them in person or through various media.

Yamasaki and Noguchi were expected to perform a distinct role that white avant-garde painters and black jazz musicians were exempt from. Like Armstrong and Ellington, the Nisei relayed the message about cultural tolerance that enabled their ascent in American society. Their blackness and Japaneseness were equally important in highlighting how nonwhites were allowed to compete and acquire stature in such prestigious fields as music, architecture, and art. At the same time, the two racial groups worked under completely different expectations. While jazz

[5] Guilbaut, *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*, 4; Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*, 4.

tour organizers hoped that black musicians and their music would showcase how they achieved mainstream status in American society and thereby signal the end of discrimination against blacks, those who commissioned the Nisei to undertake the architectural projects wanted them to represent cultural eclecticism and display their knowledge in Japanese art and culture. The expectation to reflect their ancestral culture in their production revealed the deep-rooted notion that Asian Americans' cultural identity should correspond with their ethnicity. Compared to the blacks who needed to be represented as part of the American mainstream despite ongoing Jim Crow segregation, the Japanese Americans were incorporated into the scheme of Cold War Orientalism in which their supposed "Japaneseness" was carefully aligned with their modernist aesthetics to suppress potentially threatening and unsettling Otherness.

I want to emphasize that the Nisei represented familiarity and foreignness at different times to Japanese and Western audiences, thus occasionally defying the assumed us/them binary. As Melani McAlister points out, "The us-them dichotomies of Orientalism have been fractured by the reality of a multiracial nation."[6] This dissertation shares this understanding and shows how the ambassadorial activities of two Japanese Americans revealed the porosity of the East-West boundaries. Being expected to emphasize either "American" or "Japanese" identities in different circumstances, they capitalized on their ambivalent racial and national belongings to appeal to potential clients interested in cultural eclecticism, while raising questions about hegemonic notions of race and nation. In the pages that follow, I unpack tensions that existed between Yamasaki's and Noguchi's agency to explore and establish their own unique expressions and the racial and national discourses that led them to embrace the role as a bridge between East and West.

[6] McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 11.

Yamasaki's and Noguchi's travels abroad made them realize how they were part of American modernity and yet occupied marginalized positions within it. Understanding that the Eurocentric practices and views of the American architectural and art worlds produced the alienation, they strategically performed "the social role of a marginal man" in their fields.[7] Their marginality helped them promote their image as unique and individualistic, qualities that were among the most highly valued in their professions. These unintended consequences of their ambassadorial projects indicate that Cold War cultural politics inadvertently gave rise to opportunities for the Nisei producers to challenge the dominant cultural paradigm of their fields from within.

**Minoru Yamasaki**

***An Ambassadorial Architect***

In the wake of World War II, the U.S. State Department established the Office of Foreign Buildings Operations (FBO) in 1953 to oversee the construction of government buildings abroad. The FBO program provided physical workspace for U.S. government employees in foreign countries and played an important part in the larger scheme of the Eisenhower administration's Cold War cultural diplomacy; most new embassies boasted libraries, exhibition space, and auditoriums where foreign guests were invited to cultivate friendships with Americans and promote democracy.[8] Thus the buildings themselves functioned as icons of American ideologies. *Architectural Forum* commended, "The US Government has now made US architecture a vehicle of our cultural leadership" and "a good ambassador." It urged its readers to compare the

[7] Henry Yu, *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 156–57.
[8] Loeffler, *The Architecture of Diplomacy*, 44.

progressiveness of clean, friendly, and technologically advanced U.S. embassies with "the pretentious classicism of official Soviet architecture abroad."[9] U.S. diplomatic construction became a site for a manifestation of its cultural power and way of life in its ideological war waged against the Soviet Union.[10]

While the FBO program and its architecture initially received positive reviews, some began to feel that they were not progressive enough. In the early stages of the program, the FBO's architects relied too heavily on the orthodox practices of the International Style.[11] The International Style, brought to the United States by European émigré architects, swept the country during the Great Depression. Its austere steel-and-glass boxlike architecture, divested of any decorative elements, provided an economical solution to the Depression-stricken U.S. and to the postwar world during reconstruction.[12] While the International Style was the mainstay of the program, critics pointed out that its conspicuousness in Third World countries symbolized the U.S. lack of respect for indigenous cultures and customs. Around the same time, younger architects began to seek alternatives to the rigidity of the International Style.[13] Under these circumstances, the FBO's Architectural Advisory Panel (AAP) decided to recruit a new set of architects and declared that a future building to represent the U.S. abroad should "adapt itself to local conditions and cultures so deftly that it is welcomed, not criticized, by its hosts."[14] Minoru Yamasaki was among the new generation of architects whom AAP deemed capable of presenting alternatives to conventional International Style buildings and exporting designs that fit better into the host's environment while also meeting the highest technological and aesthetic standards.

---

[9] "U.S. Architecture Abroad," *Architectural Forum* 98 (March 1953): 101–103.
[10] Robin, *Enclaves of America*, 137–40.
[11] Ibid., 142–49.
[12] Loeffler, *Architecture of Diplomacy*, 68.
[13] Robin, *Enclaves of America*, 146.
[14] "Architecture to Represent America Abroad," *Architectural Record* 117 (May 1955): 187.

The FBO strategically chose Yamasaki to be the architect for a new U.S. general consulate in Kobe, Japan, in hopes that he could express U.S. sympathy toward its former enemy as a "goodwill ambassador."[15] Yamasaki was born the son of Japanese immigrant parents in Seattle in 1912. By the time he was selected to design the U.S. consulate in 1954, he had established his status as a competent architect based in Detroit. While Yamasaki was not particularly well versed in Japanese custom and culture, Yamasaki's Japaneseness became an important factor in the FBO's decision to send him to Kobe. Yamasaki's name repeatedly appeared on the AAP's lists of potential architects for State Department buildings, along with the name of George T. Rockrise, who was noted "1/2 Jap."[16] As Jane Loeffler argues, the "architects were selected primarily for *who* they were," based on the assumption that Japanese American architects should be able to "bring a special sensitivity" to the projects of designing buildings in Japan.[17] Responding to the need for representing U.S. goodwill toward Japan, Yamasaki visualized a harmony between the two countries' cultures by drawing ideas from both the International Style and Japanese traditional architecture.

### *U.S. Consulate Building in Kobe*

Upon his selection as the architect for the U.S. general consulate building in Kobe, Yamasaki explained his vision for the new edifice: "My idea of the building would be one embodying dignity, friendliness and courtesy—dignity because it represents the Government of the US; friendliness because we are on friendly terms with Japan, and courtesy because, as guests in the Japanese house, so to speak, we owe them some deference to their architectural

[15] Meredith Oda, "Rebuilding Japantown: Japanese Americans in Transpacific San Francisco during the Cold War," *Pacific Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (February 2014): 80.
[16] Loeffler, *Architecture of Diplomacy*, 151.
[17] Ibid., 152, emphasis original.

customs."[18] Yamasaki emphasized that his building would be much different from the existing diplomatic buildings in that it would project goodwill to Japan and show respect for the host's customs with humility rather than merely manifesting the political and technological power of the United States.

The completed building gathered favorable attention from the media. The building's simplicity was reminiscent of conventional International Style buildings, but also included "Japanese" visual effects. Bert Winther-Tamaki argues that the consulate building's wooden deck overlooking the garden pond was set "in the manner of the famous moon-viewing platform at Katsura."[19] The palace, whose oldest building was built in the early seventeenth century, had been made popular internationally by German architect Bruno Taut through his books about "rediscovering" the beauty of the palace in the 1930s and its design principles' relevance to modern architecture.[20] *Architectural Forum* praised the building as "a graceful acknowledgment of US appreciation for Japanese culture." Yamasaki's building, it declared, was "more like an inviting garden pavilion than an official office building" and a welcome alternative to "a grim stone image of Washington neoclassic" that would have ruined the local landscape and unnecessarily reminded the Japanese of ongoing U.S. dominance over their society under Cold War geopolitics.[21]

Although American architectural magazines praised the Japaneseness of the consulate building, it was essentially American in a technological and structural sense. The sunshades of

---

[18] Louis Tendler, "Kobe Award Is Tribute to Detroiter," *Detroit News*, April 26, 1954, MYP, box 1, folder 13.
[19] Winther-Tamaki, "Minoru Yamasaki," 171.
[20] Shoichi Inoue, *Tsukurareta katsura rikyu shinwa* [The made-up myth of Katsura Imperial Villa] (Tokyo: Kobundo, 1986).
[21] "USA Abroad," *Architectural Forum* 107 (December 1957): 120; "A Handsome Outpost in Japan," *Architectural Forum* 108 (February 1958): 71.

the building manifested the architect's intention of making the building "look" Japanese without changing the main structure of it. The sunshades were made with fiberglass, covered with *shoji*-style bronze grid. Usually, *shoji* is made of wooden lattice, covered with white paper and used inside the building to soften the rays of the sun that come into rooms. Yamasaki's sunshades looked like *shoji*, but they used American materials and were placed on the exterior to give the building "a Japanese look" according to Yamasaki's own description, rather than to follow Japanese traditions. Notwithstanding the essentially American characteristics of the consulate building, *Architectural Record* emphasized how well "a native-born American of direct Japanese descent" exhibited "the strong influence traditional Japanese ethos and architecture have played in both [his] philosophy and design." The magazine downplayed how the features of Yamasaki's building, such as the use of screens and a raised platform, corresponded with the popular architectural style common for other embassies and consulates of the time, and instead related them to conventions in "Japanese history."[22]

The Japanese media concurred with their U.S. counterparts that the U.S. government's dispatch of Yamasaki as an architectural ambassador was successful, since he effectively showcased how to fuse different cultures in designing a building without privileging one culture over the other. The English-language edition of *Mainichi* newspaper reported, "The new building is unique in the sense that it is based on entirely new design and at the same time it is adapted to the traditional architectural technique of Japan. … The building, in a nutshell, exemplifies a fascinating trend in US architecture—diplomacy translated into architecture and architecture into

[22] All quotes in this paragraph are from "A Compliment to Traditional Japanese Architecture," *Architectural Record* 123 (February 1958): 157–159.

diplomacy."[23] Kobe's local newspaper *Shinko Shimbun* described that "American efficiency" and "Japanese elegance" coexisted in the building.[24] The overwhelmingly positive reaction to the eclectic work indicated that the "Japanization" of a U.S. consulate building effectively precluded a potential discontent of the Japanese public over growing U.S. cultural and political presence in Japan. Given Kobe was one of the port cities that had long been exposed to Western cultures since Commodore Matthew Perry's opening of Japan in the mid-nineteenth century, it was an ideal place for the U.S. government to showcase American modernity without making its edifice look conspicuously out of place. Even when the contestation over the 1960 renewal of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty that granted the United States permission to keep its bases in Japan fueled anti-Americanism, the Eisenhower administration's cultural diplomacy succeeded in winning the Japanese public's positive attention to American architecture among other forms of art.

While they both regarded Yamasaki's endeavor to harmonize American industrial technology and Japanese cultural traditions highly, the American and Japanese media had different takes on this. In contrast to American media, the Japanese media emphasized the American-born architect's effort in learning and incorporating Japanese architectural ideas. For example, *Kobe Shimbun* reported that Yamasaki worked hard to give his concrete building a feeling of the delicateness and lightness of wooden edifices, borrowing ideas from traditional Japanese aesthetics.[25] Yamasaki himself was careful not to give the impression that the consulate complex was an imitation of Japanese houses. According to *Shinko Shimbun*, Yamasaki commented that the Japanese-looking screens were not a result of his effort to make the building

[23] Narao Matsumoto, "New US Consular Building in Kobe Nearing Completion," *Mainichi*, December 4, 1956, MYP, box 1, folder 13.
[24] "Modan de nihon shumi mo" [Modern and Japanese style], *Shinko Shimbun*, November 29, 1956. All translations in this dissertation are mine, unless otherwise noted.
[25] "Nihon jocho tataeta biru" [Building with Japanese atmosphere], *Kobe Shimbun*, January 25, 1957.

look Japanese but were adopted to reduce the cost of air conditioning.[26] While Yamasaki emphasized the screen's "Japanese look" to an American interviewer, he stressed their functionality to a Japanese journalist and denied any intention to copy from traditional elements, precluding the criticism that they were an inaccurate reproduction of Japanese screens. He did not object to the American reporters associating Japanese themes of his building with his ethnic background, but he emphasized his expertise as an American architect to the Japanese audience so as not to evoke questions of the building's credibility in accurately translating fundamental principles of Japanese architecture.

### *Asserting Americanism and Nisei Identity through Architecture*

The days he spent on designing the consulate building gave Yamasaki an opportunity to learn how to negotiate his identities and what was expected of an American architect of "direct Japanese descent" to bring to American society. Visiting famous temples and gardens, Yamasaki developed the idea that the elements of "serenity, surprise, and delight"—rather than uniformity and functionalism—were what U.S. society needed most in its modern times of alienation and uncertainty that were caused by urbanization and mechanization.[27] By assuming the role of introducing Japanese architectural ideas to his fellow Americans in the field and urging them to see Japanese architecture not as subordinate to Western architecture but as an example that they could learn from, he sought to acquire the unique voice and status of his own in the competitive world of architecture.

The experience of working in Japan let Yamasaki consciously distance himself from the center of the white-dominated American architectural profession. In talking to Russell Bourne of

[26] "Modan de nihon shumi mo."
[27] Minoru Yamasaki, "A Humanist Architecture," 94–99.

*Architectural Forum* in 1958, Yamasaki expressed the psychological impact his Japan trip had on him. He explained how his relationship with Japanese culture changed significantly from one that gave him a sense of inferiority to something that saved his life. Before going to Kobe, Yamasaki did not have full control over his own life. He said, "I felt that something was missing and that I had to keep running after it. But look: everyone has a complex … mine was—that I was Japanese." He continued to describe the life-changing moment in Japan: "I got blinded by sunlight in Japanese courtyards after coming out of dark passages, stunned by their complete control of environment. This was the kind of experience you don't recover from—particularly when you feel a part of it."[28] He drew an analogy between the light and shadow of Japanese architecture and the ups and downs of his own life. Feeling that he was a part of the Japanese environment, he realized that he no longer needed to be like white architects. He gained an authoritative voice without completely reconciling his desire for a white architect's status; he could use his Japanese identity as his strength in the American architectural market, which had a long-standing interest in Japanese aesthetics.

His Nisei identity helped him gain a sense of legitimacy for teaching the importance of Japanese architecture to Western architects. In a speech titled "A Humanist Architecture for America and Its Relation to the Traditional Architecture of Japan," which he delivered to American and British audiences, he mentioned, "Frequent visits to the Orient and to Japan have helped to clarify my belief that the understanding of certain qualities in Japanese architecture will help architects to shape the kind of environment necessary to a better life. Being a Nisei probably makes me a logical candidate for this kind of discussion."[29] While he never formally learned Japanese architecture, he was able to use his ancestral ties to Japan to claim Japanese

[28] Bourne, "American Architect Yamasaki," 84–85, 166, 168.
[29] All quotes in this and the next two paragraphs are from Yamasaki, "Humanist Architecture."

knowledge vis-à-vis those who were, most likely, strangers to non-Western architectural philosophies.

Assuming the role of promoting the importance of Japanese architectural ideas to Westerners, he pointed out the heavy bias toward the West in American architectural education. He argued that non-Western architectural traditions, including Japanese, were as important as Western ones, thereby questioning the white-dominated nature of knowledge production in the American architectural world. Yamasaki consciously differentiated his position from that of modern architects who believed that "all buildings must be 'strong'" and "be a monument to the virility of our society." Yamasaki went as far as saying that these excessively masculine and overpowering buildings were "much more appropriate as an image for the totalitarian principles which we abhor." In comparison to these qualities, Yamasaki argued, the warmth, visual pleasure, and delicateness of Japanese traditional architecture were much more appropriate for a democratic society, suggesting that Japanese culture could play a significant role in enhancing American democracy. He made a radical connection between democracy and Japanese culture, typically associated with negative wartime images such as feudalism and militarism as opposed to democracy. Yamasaki's speech called attention to the fact that the lack of diversity in mainstream American culture could hurt democracy, and advocated drawing more ideas from different ways of life.

In the same speech, Yamasaki elaborated on the concepts of serenity, surprise, and delight on which he believed any architecture should be based. In explaining these concepts, he recollected his visit to a restaurant designed by a Japanese master architect. Entering from the streets into a garden, he was greeted by "carefully shaped and sensitively placed" trees, paved walks, and building. Inside the house, he walked through a dark corridor "to find a

breathtakingly lovely room." The *tokonoma* (enclave) had a window that gave silhouette to the flower arrangement placed against *shoji* screens, and the skillfully arranged posts and beams gave the whole structure a sense of integrity. He felt as if he "had been transported to fairyland, a delightful, peaceful dream, far away from the tumult of workaday Tokyo, Detroit or New York." Although he admitted that these specific details were not fit for urban buildings in the U.S., he suggested that the values that the Japanese restaurant embodied were helpful for American architects in finding alternatives to "the modular industrialised architecture." Expressing unconditional approval for the Japanese architectural tradition served two purposes: Yamasaki was able to emphasize the value of his ethnic and cultural background and validate the importance of his architecture, which he claimed had a source of inspiration in Japanese tradition. Through this speech, Yamasaki firmly established his professional identity as an architect who could translate his unique sensibilities as a Nisei into his buildings that departed from cold, monotonous designs.

The positive meaning that Yamasaki attributed to Japanese culture justified the preservation of ethnic heritage and identity of Japanese Americans and assured them that they did not need to pursue a complete assimilation into the white majority, the goal with which most Nisei had been disenchanted by then. The Japanese American Citizens League (JACL), led by elite Nisei men, recognized the architect's achievement by honoring him with the 1962 Nisei of the Biennium Award. The citation read, "By artfully blending his understanding of Japanese art and culture with that of Western architecture, he has attained in his profession a philosophy of humanism which seeks to elevate the dignity of man in his environment—a philosophy dedicated to and consistent with the highest ideals of democracy." The JACL celebrated his accomplishments both in harmonizing East and West and in embodying the tenets of democracy through his

profession. The JACL stressed that Yamasaki's contributions to American and world architecture "serve to highlight the distinguished contributions of Japanese Americans to the contemporary American scene"[30] and "the idea that Nisei can contribute to the way of life in America." In response, Yamasaki declared, "the culture of Japan was one of the highest in the world" and that "the Nisei are fortunate to have such a heritage of this kind,"[31] further stimulating Japanese Americans' pride in their ancestry.

At a time when cultural pluralism and ethnic revivalism enabled minority groups to assert their cultural heritage as an important contribution to the democratic crucible of American society,[32] the JACL found the combination of Yamasaki's Americanism and his pride in Nisei identity a great model for the rest of Japanese American communities. The JACL had faced severe criticism—from outside and from within—regarding its policy of accommodating incarceration during the war.[33] In efforts to recover a positive and authoritative image, Japanese American leaders actively engaged in highlighting the Nisei's important role in bridging the U.S. and Japan. The prominent JACL leader Mike M. Masaoka shuttled between the Japanese and U.S. governments to facilitate their conversation; the first Nisei congressman, Daniel K. Inouye, visited Japan in 1959 and declared that he wanted to learn about the problems of Asia so that he "could help to serve as a bridge of understanding between the West and the Far East."[34] Influential Nisei like Masaoka and Inouye exemplified the ideal future role of Japanese

---

[30] This and the previous quote are from "Minoru Yamasaki Humbly Accepts 1961–62 'Nisei of Biennium' Honors," *Pacific Citizen*, August 3, 1962.
[31] This and the previous two quotes are from "JACL-Nisei Can Be Helpful in Building Community of Free Asia," *Pacific Citizen*, August 3, 1962.
[32] Jacobson, *Roots Too.*
[33] Wu, *Color of Success*, 72.
[34] "Nichibei kan no shomondai ni nisei no kenkai o tsutau" [Communicating Nisei's view on issues between Japan and the United States], *Rafu Shimpo*, February 6, 1957; "Inouye Fits Nisei in US-Japan Role," *Hokubei Shimpo*, December 10, 1959.

American community members as translators between the two countries. Cultural producers, including Yamasaki, were also joining in the chorus to emphasize their ability to improve U.S.-Japan relations through cultural exchange.

While Yamasaki's Japanese American identity enabled him to claim a unique cultural proficiency as an American architect, it also caused him the hassle of dealing with clients who wished him to build Japan-themed buildings. In Detroit, where not many Asian Americans resided, he certainly benefitted from the value of distinction as a "Japanese" architect. Architect Toshihiko Takase, who once worked under Yamasaki, reflected that as American interest in Japanese culture increased, the simple syllogism that "Japanese architecture is excellent," "Minoru Yamasaki is Japanese," and "thus Yamasaki's design is excellent" seemed to prevail in the minds of Detroit residents and capitalists.[35] Yamasaki also admitted that being Nisei worked in his favor to attract clients; his Japanese name stood out among common American architects' names such as "Jones" and "Smith."[36] His Japanese face and name helped him to survive the competitive American architectural world. However, he also had to constantly warn his audience against assuming his work's Japanese "authenticity." Yamasaki said, "I jokingly protest that those who contend that my buildings have a distinctly Oriental flavor have seen my face or name before seeing my work."[37] While he emphasized the inspirations he received from Japanese architecture, he did not want others to stress his Japaneseness to the extent that his buildings would be situated outside the tradition of American architecture.

He needed to maintain his position that he was outside the mainstream but within the accepted boundaries of American architectural tradition. To a *Detroit News* reporter, Yamasaki

[35] Quoted in Iizuka, *9.11 no hyoteki o tsukutta otoko*, 99–100.
[36] "Kenchiku nimo jocho o" [Need of atmosphere for architecture], *Mainichi Shimbun*, May 15, 1960.
[37] Yamasaki, "Humanist Architecture."

complained, "I couldn't build a Japanese house if I tried. … I don't know how. I haven't the training or the background for it. Some people forget that I am American, not Japanese. They'll call and ask me to build a Japanese house. They can't understand why I can't."[38] Similarly, to a *Seattle Times* reporter, he mentioned, "if I have any Japanese influence it is more trying to get the spirit than a derivative of Japan."[39] Yamasaki wanted to have people understand that he was not trained for reproducing Japanese architecture but was trying to draw essence from it to improve his American architecture. The consulate commission contributed to developing his reputation in the U.S. as a translator of Japanese buildings, but it caused him the trouble of protecting his image as an American architect lest his work get labeled as un-American and inappropriate for a certain type of projects. At the height of Cold War Orientalism, he carefully navigated his way through public attention so that he would make the most of the popularity of Japanese culture and not completely alienate himself from the American architectural establishment.

**Isamu Noguchi**

***An Artistic Ambassador***

Born the illegitimate son of Japanese poet Yonejiro Noguchi and Caucasian American educator and editor Leonie Gilmour, who worked as an assistant for Yonejiro's English poetry composition, in Los Angeles in 1904, Isamu negotiated his complex identities throughout his life. He spent his childhood in Japan until he was sent back to the U.S. when he was thirteen for his education focusing on art. When he changed his last name from Gilmour to Noguchi in order to

[38] William W. Lutz, "Our Buildings Are Useful, and That's about All," *Detroit News*, May 6, 1958, picture page, 46, "Minoru Yamasaki Papers," ALUA, box 1, folder 14.
[39] Margaret Pitcairn Strachan, "Beauty Has Place in Our Buildings, Says Yamasaki," *Seattle Times*, April 24, 1962, "Minoru Yamasaki Papers," ALUA, box 2, folder 2.

establish his professional identity as a Japanese American artist in 1924, he already knew that his Japaneseness was going to be an important, and inevitable, part of his image in the American art world. However, unlike Yamasaki who was "of direct Japanese descent" and thus whose Japaneseness was rarely questioned, Noguchi's Japaneseness was ambiguous, and how others perceived it was always subject to the environment in which he found himself at a particular moment in his life.

At a time when the idea of East-West cultural exchange became idealized, some journalists and critics hailed Noguchi's "hybridity" as an embodiment of the democratic crucible of the United States.[40] Describing Noguchi's recent work and exhibit in Japan in 1951, a *New York Times* reporter mentioned, "No better artistic ambassador or example could have been found than Noguchi. During his years of self-imposed exile in France and America he has achieved in his own work a fusion not only of East and West, but also of contemporary and traditional idioms."[41] While Noguchi was an American citizen, the reporter described his time in America as a "self-imposed exile" as if it was in the same nature as his brief stay in France (1927–29), where he apprenticed with renowned sculptor Constantin Brancusi. The reporter seems to have cared less about distinguishing the American artist with a Japanese name from Japanese nationals, thereby falling into the pervasive practice of seeing a Japanese American as a perpetual foreigner regardless of their citizenship status. Describing Noguchi as an East-West fusion was a practice made common by critic Thomas B. Hess, who declared that the artist "has fused in his art the East and the West as they were fused in his body."[42] The commission to design a Japanese garden for the UNESCO headquarters in Paris was decisive in crystallizing his image as an artist

[40] Lyford, *Isamu Noguchi's Modernism*, 124.
[41] Louchheim, "Noguchi and 'Sculptured' Gardens."
[42] Hess, "Isamu Noguchi '46," 34.

who could aesthetically harmonize the two worlds as he did, admirers believed, in his everyday life.

### *Japanese Garden for UNESCO*

As World War II drew to a close on the European front, UNESCO formed to ensure the educational, scientific, and cultural development of the postwar world under the guidance of the victorious nations of the war. One of UNESCO's main roles was to represent a harmonious relationship among different cultures of East and West, and the new UNESCO headquarters to be constructed in Paris assumed an important responsibility to reflect this ideal. However, the architects chosen to design the headquarters—Marcel Breuer of the United States, Pier Nervi of Italy, and Bernard Zehrfuss of France—did not reflect non-Western cultural diversity. The decision reflected Cold War geopolitical tensions in its heavy concentration of Europeans and Americans and in its exclusion of peoples from the communist bloc.[43] In its attempt to lessen the impression of Euro-American domination, the Committee of Art Advisers proposed in May 1955 that "a garden in the Japanese style" be designed in a courtyard.[44] Apparently with this plan in mind, leading architect Breuer approached Noguchi five months later to ask for his involvement.[45] Noguchi's selection as a contributor to the headquarters, therefore, was motivated by the necessity to increase the *feel* of diversity in nationalities by including a nonwhite name in the roster.

From the perspective of the architects, Noguchi was the best candidate; in the early 1950s, Noguchi had spent time in Japan, where he worked with Japanese gardeners and successfully

---

[43] Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations*, 147.
[44] Quoted in Marc Treib, *Noguchi in Paris: The Unesco Garden* (San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2003), 45–46.
[45] Duus, *The Life of Isamu Noguchi*, 273.

demonstrated his landscaping skills through the garden he designed for a new Reader's Digest building. Breuer's choice of Noguchi had a practical side as well. He thought that if Noguchi was selected as the designer for the UNESCO courtyard, the Japanese government might be interested in funding him, which would make up for the limited budget that UNESCO could allocate the artist. Breuer's logic stood on the assumption that Noguchi, as a "Japanese," should be able to convince Japanese government officials to support the project. Noguchi pointed out to Breuer that he was an American citizen, calling attention to the fact that technically he represented neither Japan nor Asia. It did not seem to matter to Breuer though, as long as the designer had a Japanese name and some connections to Japan. Although he was not fully convinced by Breuer's logic, Noguchi still found it a great opportunity as an artist to be able to install his work at the headquarters of the world's central institution for culture. Following Breuer's suggestion, Noguchi embarked on soliciting financial aid from various public and private sectors. In one of the letters enticing support, Noguchi indicated that his garden "would not be typically Japanese," but "it would still have the essential character of Japanese gardens, which is inherent in my attitude."[46] Thus, he stressed his ties and familiarity with Japanese traditions in justifying his leading the project as a non-Japanese citizen.

At a time when Japan sought to recover its status in international relations and to prove that its culture was on par with its Western counterparts in terms of historical significance, Noguchi shrewdly negotiated its participation in beautifying the UNESCO headquarters. Asking for assistance in securing necessary materials for the project, Noguchi mentioned in his letter to a Japanese ambassador to the United Nations that "a participation by the Japanese Government" would "fulfill the sentimental desire to have a visible contribution by an Asian country to the

[46] Letter, Isamu Noguchi to Toru Hagiwara, January 9, 1957, "Projects: UNESCO Gardens—Correspondence, January–June 1957," UNESCO Files, Noguchi Museum, folder 4.

buildings of UNESCO (which would be in harmony with the architecture)."[47] Noguchi here acted as a spokesperson for UNESCO to encourage Japan to demonstrate its democratic commitment in peaceful and educational activities. He worked to assist UNESCO in representing itself as a culturally egalitarian institution.

As Noguchi bargained with the Japanese government to invest in the project, Japanese representatives in Paris did seem to place more emphasis on his Japaneseness than Americanness. The Japanese member on the Headquarters Committee Akira Matsui spoke highly of Noguchi's service to Japan. Matsui mentioned at a committee meeting that Noguchi had "asked experts in *his own country* whether the project was authentically Japanese in character" and that "many of those experts had been delighted with it."[48] In Matsui's comment, Japan was where Noguchi belonged. Noguchi's national identity, in this context, was remarkably fluid. In addition to Breuer identifying Noguchi as a "Japanese," now a Japanese representative at UNESCO described Japan as Noguchi's "own country," diminishing his American citizenship. Noguchi in turn took advantage of his national identity's fluidity to gather maximum support to realize a modern Japanese garden in Paris.

While Noguchi's strategic deployment of his Japaneseness contributed to drawing sympathy for his project from the Japanese representatives in Paris, certain uneasiness existed in Japan about his project and his representing the country. Noguchi learned that the Ministry of Education had intended "to present UNESCO with something typical from Japan such as 'Makie (lacquer or wooden carving) or Nishijin Tapestry [traditional textile produced in Kyoto]'" and

[47] Letter, Isamu Noguchi to Toshikazu Kase, September 24, 1956, "Projects: UNESCO Gardens—Correspondence, 1955–1956," UNESCO Files, Noguchi Museum, folder 3.
[48] Quoted in Treib, *Noguchi in Paris*, 78, emphasis added.

that "the idea of abandoning this in favor of a garden face[d] some difficulty."[49] Noguchi was also aware that some thought his garden was "not sufficiently Japanese." In order to circumvent the charge that Noguchi might not be suitable in executing a Japanese garden, he proposed including an additional section in his plan that "could become quite a characteristic Japanese garden with many traditional features … through importing the actual stones and the sill of their arrangements from Japan." Noguchi sought to supplement the lack of authenticity that some felt of him and his plan by incorporating materials originating in Japan.

Upon Noguchi's suggestion, the UNESCO project was organized in two juxtaposed areas: the Delegates Patio and an additional sunken garden. In the Patio, he placed a tall nine-ton fountain sculpture. The sculpture bore Noguchi's abstract engraving based on the Chinese character *wa*, meaning peace or harmony. The engraving suggested Noguchi's yet another attempt to bridge East and West as a cultural ambassador and emphasizing UNESCO's raison d'être: expressing the hope for world peace and East-West cultural harmony.

Noguchi received substantial assistance from people in Japan in landscaping the sunken garden below the Patio, which he intended to be closer in spirit to a traditional Japanese garden. The Japanese government offered generous financial support to ship eighty tons of rocks and trees from Japan. Mirei Shigemori, arguably the most influential Japanese landscape designer in the second half of the twentieth century, assisted Noguchi in selecting the stones to use for the garden and sent his gardeners and stonecutters to Paris to help the artist. The garden came to have significant connections with Japan as the planners had originally envisioned.

[49] Letter, Isamu Noguchi to Michel Dard, January 8, 1957, "Projects: UNESCO Gardens—Correspondence, January–June 1957," UNESCO Files, Noguchi Museum, folder 4. The other quotes in this paragraph are also from this letter.

Although Noguchi paid an "obvious homage to the Japanese garden" because of "the nature of the commission," the end result presented his own interpretation of the spirit of historic gardens rather than an imitation of them.[50] Many elements of his work were not at all what people associated with Japanese gardens. For example, he installed a roadway that connected the upper patio and the lower garden, making allusion to "the 'flowery path' or bridge of entry (*hanamichi*)" in traditional Japanese theater.[51] The straight path that went across the garden made a striking contrast with the curved contours of the green areas and pond. Moreover, the use of bright blue stones symbolized Noguchi's will to free from the regular principles of Japanese tradition. Noguchi knew that the bright stones lacked *shibusa* (austerity), which was an important factor for a quiet tea garden, but he thought that his garden surrounded by modern architecture did not need that.[52] Noguchi explained, "My effort was to find a way to link [the] ritual of rocks which comes down to us through the Japanese from the dawn of history to our modern times and needs."[53] Thus, he suggested his ability to recontextualize Japanese tradition within modernism. Overall, the UNESCO project gave him valuable lessons in working with stones and navigating through the politics of authenticity and various assumptions about the traditional-modern and East-West dichotomies.

### *Capitalizing on Non-belongingness*

Through his work as a cultural ambassador for UNESCO—and shuttling between France, Japan, and the United States—Noguchi developed a sense of non-belonging. Articulating his

[50] "Garden of Peace," *UNESCO Courier* (November 1958): 33.
[51] Noguchi, quoted in ibid., 33.
[52] Isamu Noguchi, "Ishi: Pari no 'nippon no niwa' o tsukuru" [Stone: Making a "Japanese Garden" in Paris], *Geijutsu Shincho* 8 (July 1957): 155.
[53] "Garden of Peace," 33.

precarious status in different artistic communities and nations and its influence on his art helped to distinguish his unique position as a cosmopolitan artist. The strategic formation of his identity as an outsider reinforced his individualism, which came to be valued greatly during the Cold War era.

In his 1968 autobiography, Noguchi described his sense of being caught between the fissures of time and space: "Returning from making the UNESCO gardens, I was always struck by the contrasts of America, Japan, and the rest of the world; the difference in materiality, or should one say, the concepts of reality, which is not just a question of place but of the modern versus the old world—the permanent reality of the past and the fluid reality of the present. I found myself a stranger."[54] Defining Japan and the United States as two worlds completely opposite from each other in their ways of life in turn defined Noguchi as a traveler who could transcend the boundaries that seemed impenetrable. Noguchi thus took advantage of the widely believed East-West distinction to reinforce the importance of his knowledge and experience in both the "old" and the "modern."

Noguchi's friend and noted architect R. Buckminster Fuller wrote the foreword to the autobiography in which he reinforced the fatefulness of the artist's mobility and non-belongingness: "He has to-and-froed in his great back and front yards whose eastward and westward extensions finally merged to encircle the earth. … Noguchi's European-Asiatic-American genes defied his conscious urge to settle down. … It proved biologically and intellectually impossible for him to escape his fate of being a founding member of an omni-crossbred world society."[55] Although Fuller's racial essentialism and biological determinism were problematic in themselves, his characterization of Noguchi as a hybrid world citizen laid

[54] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 35.
[55] R. Buckminster Fuller, foreword to ibid., 7.

the grounds on which Noguchi could assert mobility as his unique asset. "I find myself a wanderer," Noguchi mentioned. "Artist, American citizen, world citizen, belonging anywhere but nowhere."[56] He thus emphasized his multilayered subjectivities as well as elusive identities.

The sense of isolation he felt in New York—where he had a studio and most of his friends—derived not only from his constant absence from the city but also from his status as a nonwhite artist. Scholars agree that Noguchi did not quite belong to the New York School, or the group of Abstract Expressionists active in the city, which dominated the post–World War II American art scene and with which his friends were closely associated. To be sure, Noguchi and New York School artists shared basic approaches to art. Unlike the Depression-era artists for whom social realism was the predominant art form, the artists who came to prominence in the postwar era—including Noguchi—embraced abstraction as a means of expression that denied simple interpretation. However, nonwhite, female, and queer artists were constantly marginalized in the Abstract Expressionists' sphere, the custom to which Noguchi was no exception. During the Cold War, when anxiety emerged about "encroaching collectivity and conformity," Ann Eden Gibson explains, Abstract Expressionism came "to stand for a certain kind of frontier heroism that supported the American ideals of universalism, individualism, and freedom."[57] For example, Jackson Pollock's work, whose instantaneity, masculinity, and anti-intellectualism seemingly defied any concrete political message to be attached, embodied "a universal product that could speak for everyone."[58] The "universal" language, developed by the central figures of Abstract Expressionism, was in large part inaccessible for Noguchi, who was frequently linked

[56] Noguchi, *Sculptor's World*, 39.
[57] Ann Eden Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997), 2.
[58] Ibid., xxvi, 3–5.

to Japan and expected to show "Oriental" features because of his ancestry.[59] Not considered to be eligible for claiming a "universal" style of art, Noguchi vigorously sought to invent new expressions, which involved both interpreting Japanese art forms in modernism's context and avoiding being strongly connected with them.

The publication of the autobiography opened excited discussions on his background, and Noguchi found various venues where he could actively shape his distinctness. To *Newsweek* journalist David L. Shirley, Noguchi mentioned, "I'm the fusion of two worlds, the East and the West, and yet I hope I reflect more than both," resonating with Hess's and Fuller's expressions and yet emphasizing that his art went beyond the categories of East and West. Using Hess's old cliché, Shirley described Noguchi as "an international nomad," who used "the tools of exile" like James Joyce to embellish the landscapes of Europe, Middle East, Japan, and the United States.[60] Noguchi's image as a "nomad" and an "exile" contributed to highlighting the relevance of his works in the global context and liberating them—to some extent—from strict national and racial categorization.

Noguchi also used his hybrid identities to explain his unique familiarity with the artistic language of abstraction and to make his sensibilities sound exceptionally suitable for the genealogy of modern art. Critic Clement Greenberg noted in 1940 that Abstract Expressionists regarded "Oriental, primitive, and children's art as instances of the universality and naturalness and objectivity of their ideal of purity."[61] Noguchi, who attributed a source of his artistic inspiration to the memory of his childhood in Japan where "nature is very close," believed early

---

[59] Lyford, *Isamu Noguchi's Modernism*, 135.
[60] Shirley, "Noguchi," 94.
[61] Clement Greenberg, "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940), in *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, ed. John O'Brian (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1: 32, quoted in Gibson, *Abstract Expressionism*, 20.

on that he was "especially fitted to be one of [the] prophets" of abstract art.[62] Noguchi described his artistic activity as "seeking after identity with some primal matter beyond personalities and possessions"—which often led him back to Japan where he could feel "the last warmth of the earth"—and trying to achieve "something irreducible, an absence of the gimmicky and clever."[63] While Noguchi did not have the privilege of claiming a universality of his art, he could exploit his hybrid background and assert his "native" experience in Japan as the basis for his art's relevance to the influential brand of modern art and the ideal it was imbued with. Here, he found a new way to embrace his East-West identity without relegating himself completely outside the contemporary American artist community. At the same time, by accepting his precarious status within it, Noguchi revealed fissures in mainstream American cultural producers' assertion of their liberal attitude toward differences. Carefully playing up his sensibilities for primitiveness without totally assimilating his work to it, he skillfully acquired a position that his white counterparts could not claim.

**Conclusion**

Yamasaki's general consulate building and Noguchi's Japanese garden were the results of visualizing a harmony between East and West. As the Nisei chosen for these projects, both felt responsible to satisfy their employers' desire to see what they perceived as Japanese, although the architect and artist did not completely reconcile their own desire to showcase their expertise in the use of unique materials and modernist techniques. The cultural ambassadorial projects

[62] Harold C. Schonberg, "Isamu Noguchi, a Kind of Throwback," *New York Times Magazine*, April 14, 1968, 29; Katharine Kuh, *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 171.
[63] Schonberg, "Isamu Noguchi," 29; Noguchi, *Sculptor's World*, 40.

served as experimental grounds for Yamasaki and Noguchi to try new aesthetics with ideas inspired by the old palace and gardeners in Japan.

Working abroad provided a new perspective on their own values in the American architectural and art worlds. American architectural writers generally regarded Yamasaki's "direct" Japanese lineage as translating into a Japanese sensitivity. In contrast, Japanese writers were concerned less with the degree of Japanese authenticity that the building achieved than with the latest American technologies on which it was based. As for Noguchi, his mixed-race identity gave rise to the question regarding his work's authenticity. The artist in turn took advantage of his hybridity to free his artwork from national and racial categorization and to assert his unique suitableness as a torchbearer of abstract art under the restrictions of Cold War politics and ideologies.

## Chapter 4
## Negotiating Japaneseness:
## Mixed-Race Nisei Artist Isamu Noguchi in U.S.-Occupied Japan

On May 2, 1950, Isamu Noguchi was surprised to find many journalists waiting for his arrival at the Tokyo International Airport. He had spent his childhood in Japan, and after being trained as an artist in the United States and Europe, he returned to his father's country for a short period in the early 1930s. Noguchi's subsequent return to U.S.-occupied Japan in 1950 was the first major event for Japanese cultural producers—especially avant-garde artists and innovative architects and designers—who were seeking to produce arts that were meaningful not only to their own milieus, but also to the world when GHQ's censorship and travel restrictions were still in place.

In his 1968 autobiography, Noguchi recalled the enthusiastic welcome he received: "I was immediately swamped by all the artists, and their various groups seeking my participation. I felt like the pigeon harbinger after the Deluge."[1] He thought, "They wanted to look to me to show them how to function again after the long years of totalitarian misdirection of all energies, and I found it a duty to do what I could to help prime the pump of their renaissance."[2] Uncritically accepting these words may lead one to picture a scene in which Noguchi, the heroic American artist, salvaged the Japanese, who were devastated by the war. In Noguchi's account, the Japanese artists were rendered as passive subjects of his enormous cultural influence who were in need of a strong leader to rebuild their nation and culture. However, the artists and other cultural producers in reality were not passive, helpless, or at a loss for what to do; they did not simply follow this famous artist's lead into the modern Western world. Rather, they took

[1] Isamu Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 31.
[2] Isamu Noguchi, "Recent Work Exhibited in Japan," *Arts and Architecture* 67, no. 11 (November 1950): 26.

advantage of Noguchi's visit in their efforts to reclaim respect for their culture and to establish its relevance in the world of modern art.

In this chapter, I first examine Noguchi's place vis-à-vis the discourse of the Japanese nation in the early post-World War II period, which is critical to understanding the relationship formed between Noguchi and his Japanese peers. Then, I discuss Noguchi's activities in Japan to show how Japanese cultural producers evaluated his art and how they defined his Japaneseness and foreignness. Lastly, I turn to Noguchi's own negotiation with his Japaneseness. These analyses show that the concepts of Japanese race, ethnicity, culture, and nation remained fluid as Noguchi and those around him asserted both the uniqueness of Japanese culture and its compatibility with Western ideas. What also becomes clear is that the discursive force of Cold War Orientalism was not unmitigated. Various individuals, including Noguchi and the Japanese cultural producers discussed in this chapter, intervened in its working and pushed against it to better exercise their authority over their products and productive activities.

**Noguchi and the Discourse of "*Minzoku*"**

The arrival of the U.S. Occupation forces, and the following modernization of the socio-political and economic systems under their guidance, generated mixed motivations for Japanese cultural producers to search for a renewed cultural identity. They desired to regain cultural pride, and at the same time, they wanted to find artistic idioms that would cater to groups with strong purchasing power, which included GIs stationed in Japan and the American middle class across the ocean. The Japanese art and architectural communities, therefore, launched their quest for reclaiming strength and originality for their culture, which involved both rearticulating national,

racial, and ethnic identities and steering clear of anything that could be evocative of wartime jingoism and totalitarianism.

In the postwar era, Japanese artists and architects were on guard against associations with nationalism that could negatively impact their pursuits of success in the international community. Notable artists' wartime involvement in propaganda efforts left the Japanese art world vulnerable to suspicion. The most well-known art "war criminal," namely the painter Tsuguharu Fujita, was virtually expelled from Japan as a scapegoat to shoulder the blame of producing propaganda work in support of Japanese imperialism. After removing Fujita, Japanese cultural producers needed to let others know that they were actively engaged in a democratic reform of their field. In this socio-political climate, Japanese art circles enthusiastically embraced a mixed-race Nisei artist, who arrived right after Fujita's departure for France,[3] and whose involvement in their activities, they believed, could signify their openness and progressiveness.

Noguchi, who declared that the cultures of East and West could coexist and supplement each other, seemed to be a perfect aide to Japanese cultural producers in exploring novel ideas that were uniquely Japanese and would also appeal to Western audiences. They defined Noguchi as a special kind of foreigner who came most closely to understanding the essence of Japanese artistic tradition. Arata Isozaki points out that the "gaze from without"—the foreigner's gaze—has played a crucial part in shaping Japan's uniqueness in art and architectural contexts.[4] Foreigners, or white Euro-Americans to be more specific, traditionally viewed Japan as Other, and "as the Japanese processed Western modernity in their own fashion, they somehow also

[3] Fujita eventually acquired French nationality.
[4] Arata Isozaki, *Japan-ness in Architecture*, trans. Sabu Kohso (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 36, 50.

looked for Japan as the Other within themselves."[5] Seeking to establish non-Western identity has been a continuously growing trend since the Meiji period when artists, no longer backed by strong samurai patrons like they used to be in the Edo period, had to appeal to wider audiences abroad as well as the upscale clientele at home. After Japan's defeat in World War II, and as the U.S. Occupation authorities led the democratic reform of the country, this trend took an interesting turn. While the Japanese internalized American values and standards, they also began to reestablish the discourse on Japanese uniqueness,[6] or the notion about Japan as Other that ought to be impervious to Western influence and its value system.

In this context, Noguchi constituted an extraordinary "gaze from without" because of his mixed-race background. On one hand, he was an American who was successful in the Western art world, and Japanese artists expected him to be able to share intimate knowledge on how to appeal to Western audiences. Noguchi's partial whiteness moreover functioned as a signifier of the Western civilization that the Japanese were taught to look up to under the Occupation forces' intense democratization and modernization. On the other hand, Noguchi's Japanese allies asserted that he had an inherent understanding of Japanese uniqueness because of his "blood" inherited from his famous father. It was the combination of this insider/outsider status that made him special.

To understand the crucial position that Noguchi acquired in U.S.-occupied Japan, it is necessary to look at the contemporary discussions on race and culture that took place in Japanese academia. In the postwar resurgence of the myth of Japan as "*tanitsu minzoku kokka*," or a monoracial nation, left-wing intellectuals increasingly used the word "*minzoku*" to refer to the

[5] Ibid., 50.
[6] Yasushi Watanabe, "'Japan' through the Looking-Glass: American Influences on the Politics of Cultural Identity in the Post-War Japan," *Passages* 2, no.1 (2000): 25–26.

race indigenous to the Japanese archipelago with a distinct culture.[7] According to Eiji Oguma, "*minzoku*" became a key concept in reinforcing the unity of the national body in postwar Japan. The war left the country with a wide gap between the rich and the poor and the urban and country dwellers. The divide was so severe that it was almost impossible to imagine the "Japanese" as a united nation.[8] Under this condition, "*minzoku*" became a magic word that enabled the invention of a homogenous base for the divided nation. The wide used of the term "*minzoku*" was striking when contrasted with the less popularity of the term "*shimin*," which means "citizen" in Japanese. "*Shimin*," a concept imported from the West with a hint of cosmopolitanism, was often associated with the urban middle class and the petit-bourgeoisie who were charged with embracing Western culture and being complicit in the Western ideological dominance of Japan.[9] Left-wing intellectuals regarded "*shimin*" with derision, whereas they sided with "*minzoku*." As the idea of ethnic self-determination gained more currency, "*minzoku*" was used interchangeably with "*minshu*," or "the public."[10] In this context, the way of tea and flower arrangement became celebrated as "*minzoku bunka*" (*bunka* means "culture") to rejuvenate Japanese self-esteem.[11] Race, ethnicity, and culture thus were closely intertwined and mutually constitutive with each other in early postwar Japan.

Noguchi's Japanese artist friends had to prove themselves to be capable of contributing to the development of "*minzoku bunka*" while also looking outside this particular cultural sphere

---

[7] In this context, Ainu and Korean Japanese were often obliterated from view. Eiji Oguma, *"Minshu" to "aikoku": sengo Nihon no nashonarizumu to kokyosei* [*"Democracy" and "patriotism": nationalism and the sense of public in postwar Japan*] (Tokyo: Shinyosha, 2002), 255, 281–282; Eiji Oguma, *Tanitsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: "Nihonjin" no jigazo no keifu* [*The origin of the myth of the homogeneous nation: a genealogy of the self-image of the "Japanese"*] (Tokyo: Shinyosha, 1995), 394.
[8] Oguma, *"Minshu" to "aikoku*," 260.
[9] Ibid., 261, 281.
[10] Ibid., 244.
[11] Ibid., 282.

for new opportunities and inspirations in the wider world. They therefore needed to balance their "*minzoku*" and "*shimin*" identities and seek ways to make the two compatible. In this context, Noguchi, who both claimed Japanese heritage and embodied cosmopolitanism, served as a catalyst for discussion among the Japanese over how to be creative and competitive like Western artists while preserving and developing the strengths of their uniqueness.

Japanese cultural producers and Noguchi strategically maintained Noguchi's status as a unique subject with a special gaze—neither completely foreign nor fully Japanese. Many of the cultural producers deemed Noguchi's favorable influence on the Japanese art world so significant that they did not simply define him as a foreign voyeur. They oftentimes described him as a part of "us." They explained that Noguchi, being part Japanese, had an inherent advantage in understanding traditional Japanese culture compared to foreigners without ethnic ties to Japan. Simultaneously, some of them also pointed out that Noguchi's Americanness, inherited and developed through his life and work in his mother's country, left an indelible mark on his oeuvre, thereby emphasizing his status as Other. The "us/them" binary was intentionally kept unstable on many occasions to let Noguchi go in and out of the constructed boundaries of Japaneseness—the discourse about the purported racial and cultural uniqueness of the Japanese. The fluidity of Noguchi's Japaneseness was convenient for the Japanese art establishment to have him function as an insider and outsider according to its specific needs. Not completely including Noguchi inside the boundaries of Japaneseness allowed Japanese leaders of art to maintain authority over their own cultural sphere and their status in the international art market as the authentic Japanese cultural producers.

The fluidity of Noguchi's Japaneseness was reinforced as he chose to maintain a certain distance from Japanese society. Japanese cultural producers took advantage of Noguchi's

ambiguous status, and so did Noguchi; he capitalized on his mobility and elusiveness that defied national categorization and later materialized his identity as a "cultural exile" (discussed in chapter three). While he emphasized his special attachment to his fatherland, he also mentioned that he repeatedly returned there as a "beggar or a thief, seeking the last warmth of the earth."[12] Noguchi defined Japan as a place where premodern, pre-civilized warmth—as opposed to the cold and impersonal feeling of the industrialized city—remained. Embracing his status as an outsider who received inspiration from a residue of primitive culture, he found a way to take advantage of the Japanese premodern in developing his own artistic idioms while protecting his image from being tied too strongly with Japan. As Ryu Niimi points out, Japan provided Noguchi with an environment in which he could test his talent for "modern primitivism," where he sought to combine Western modernism with elements and expressions of Japanese arts and crafts.[13] As much as he could not claim the mainstream American status, he could not assert genuine Japaneseness, regardless of his paternal heritage, childhood spent in Japan, and knowledge of Japanese tradition and aesthetics. Thus, from the outset, he aimed for reinterpreting Japanese cultural heritage in the world context, rather than trying to fit himself in a more limiting definition based on a particular nationality and bloodline.

In what follows, I examine the ways in which Noguchi and Japanese cultural producers negotiated the former's Japaneseness as they both sought to acquire inspiration from each other and aimed to find novel forms of expression. My argument is inspired by Winther-Tamaki's criticism that existing scholarship on Noguchi's life and work has relied on the essentialistic binary of "East" and "West" as "racial and civilizational terms arrayed as extreme opposites in

[12] Noguchi, *A Sculptor's World*, 40.
[13] Ryu Niimi, "The Modern Primitive: Discourses of the Visual Arts in Japan in the 1950s," in Louise Allison Cort and Bert Winther-Tamaki, *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics: A Close Embrace of the Earth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 93–94.

the spectrum of humanity" in defining the artist and his art.[14] Winther-Tamaki warns against the temptation to jump on this East/West polarization as a convenient way to explain the uniqueness of Noguchi's art as a remarkable fusion of these two seemingly incompatible entities. Moreover, while existing scholarship tends to define Noguchi's belonging in terms of a specific country, Japan or the United States, or describes him as being caught between the two, Winther-Tamaki argues that "Noguchi's personal sense of affiliation was conflicted and shifted with some frequency during his career; at times it was closer to Japan, at times America, and sometimes elsewhere."[15] While Winther-Tamaki's work is focused on how Noguchi imagined various places as home and thus *circumvented* the force of "artistic nationalism" that tried to align his work and career with a particular nation,[16] I focus on how Noguchi actually *negotiated* the notion of Japaneseness that was a critical part of discourses on Japanese nationalism and belonging. I argue that Noguchi's racial, ethnic, and cultural identities remained quite fluid over the course of his involvement in the Japanese art scene. Together Noguchi and Japanese cultural producers manipulated his Japaneseness and belonging, sometimes asserting and other times suppressing them, which proved important in advocating their art contributions to the modern world. Both Noguchi and his fellow Japanese artists had to walk a fine line between contributing to "*minzoku bunka*" and exploring cosmopolitan possibilities in order to increase their chances of success in Japanese and Western markets.

[14] Winther-Tamaki, *Art in the Encounter of Nations*, 114.
[15] Ibid., 188.
[16] Ibid., 5–9.

**Reclaiming an Honorable Lineage**

Within days of Noguchi's arrival, Japanese art and media moguls organized parties, interviews, and lectures, where he was showered with praises and amicable attention, being heralded as a rising star in the American art scene. The number of Noguchi's contacts snowballed as powerful figures in the art and architectural establishments scrambled to introduce themselves and refer him to their friends. The new network of friends soon brought him a major project: the interior and the garden of a faculty-student hall called Shin-Banraisha (New Welcoming Hall) at Keio University. This project and the one-man exhibit that he put together along the way enabled him to demonstrate his role of the "pigeon harbinger" that showed the Japanese how to combine Japanese traditional aesthetics and Western modernist expressions and be successful in the international market. Over the course of these activities in the early 1950s, various individuals attempted to advocate and challenge Noguchi's Japaneseness, which revealed his contested position in the Japanese discourses of race, ethnicity, culture, and nation.

The Shin-Banraisha project was pivotal in laying the foundation on which Noguchi could act as an appropriate liaison for instilling the Japanese art world with a renewed pride in its culture, since this project provided him with an opportunity to redefine his relationship with his late father, Yonejiro. He was a part of the Keio faculty and a highly acclaimed poet, who published in both English and Japanese and was active in British, American, and Japanese literary circles. Despite his celebrated career, he became discredited and criticized as a chauvinist because of his support for Japanese imperialism during the war. Through the Shin-Banraisha project, which commemorated Yonejiro, Noguchi played a significant part in posthumously rehabilitating and revising the role of his father: overwriting chauvinism with his desire for a

democratic Japan. He thereby contributed to the Japanese art world's efforts in cleansing itself of negative images and rejuvenating its pride and status.

The Shin-Banraisha project effectively redefined Yonejiro, rewriting his legacy in a positive tone. In the late 1930s, he had vocally supported Japan's "holy war" in China as a step toward establishing "a new world" in East Asia.[17] In contrast, Noguchi criticized Japan's imperialism and supported China's cause to fight against it. Japan's defeat and the ensuing criticism of his war-glorifying poems depressed Yonejiro, whose health had already been deteriorating. He passed away in 1947, which made it easier for Noguchi to tame the narrative of his father.

Through the Shin-Banraisha project, Noguchi sought to further deemphasize his father's nationalism. He proposed to design a lounge and a garden that "would constitute a memorial to the contemplative, scholastically productive life [Yonejiro] led."[18] This conceptualization enabled him to emphasize his father's artistic and academic legacy rather than his association with wartime propaganda. He explained that Shin-Banraisha was "no memorial in the terms of heroics, nor merely centered upon the memory of a man" but was "made for all men."[19] Rendering Yonejiro as one among many for whom the project was meant, Noguchi diluted his father's individuality and his specific activities during the war.

These redefinitions and normalizations were important not only for Noguchi, who did not want the stigma of the chauvinist's son, but also for his fellow Japanese artists who saw his visit as a great opportunity to change Japanese art's image in the world. Yonejiro's bloodline was the

---

[17] Yonejiro Noguchi, "Mitabi Tagoru ni atau" [To Tagore for the Third Time], *Yomiuri Shimbun*, December 13, 1938.
[18] Arthur Drexler, "Noguchi, Traveling Sculptor Pauses in Japan," *Interiors* 110, no. 9 (April 1951): 140.
[19] Isamu Noguchi, "A Stage, Quietly Dramatic," *Kokusai kenchiku* 17, no. 5 (November 1950): 31.

only reason for their claim about Noguchi's capability to understand Japan, and Yonejiro was the sole justification for Noguchi's Japaneseness. Revising the memory of Yonejiro was thus necessary for allowing Noguchi to play a respectable role in Japanese art circles.

Noguchi stressed that his work on Shin-Banraisha was a privilege he was given through which he was able to "speak to the youth of Japan in reconciliation of the wounds."[20] He expressed his regret for not having been able to help the Japanese who were suffering during the war despite his "being half-Japanese,"[21] and hoped that his reconciliatory activities would help the young generation to move on without the fetters of the negative past. In this way, the Shin-Banraisha project contributed to burying Yonejiro and other nationalists' wartime commitments with the past. Noguchi's encouragement for the Japanese to look ahead into the future functioned to discourage scrutiny over the Japanese art world's relations to the war efforts. This simultaneously enabled Noguchi to pave the way for his active role in rejuvenating the postwar Japanese art world.

**Japaneseness in Noguchi's Art**

Along the way of preparing his works for the Shin-Banraisha project, Noguchi had his first one-man exhibit in Japan in August 1950 at the Mitsukoshi Department Store in Nihonbashi, Tokyo. He displayed furniture, earthenware, and sculpture that he produced since his arrival in May. Around this exhibit, notable artists commented on how Noguchi understood Japanese "spiritual beauty" and spatiality thanks to his Japanese "blood" inherited from his father. In the

[20] Isamu Noguchi, "Shigoto ni tsuite" [On work], *Shin kenchiku* 27, no. 2 (February 1952): 59, KUAC.
[21] Isamu Noguchi, "Sekai ni niwa o tsukuru" [Making gardens in the world] *Geijutsu shincho* 11, no. 7 (July 1960): 76.

rhetorical discourse of Noguchi's Japaneseness, race—which was often referred to as "blood"—and culture were inextricably linked with each other and sometimes rendered as one.

Prominent artist Saburo Hasegawa, who believed that the 1950 exhibit illuminated the direction in which Japanese art should proceed, was one of the most vocal supporters of Noguchi's involvement in Japanese art circles.[22] According to Hasegawa, Noguchi said that he felt the need to warn Japan against copying the West and to urge it to rediscover itself like Ernest Fenollosa and Tenshin Okakura did during the Meiji era to.[23] Hasegawa also thought that the Japanese should recognize the beauty of their traditional art and make it their strength rather than dismissing it as something obsolete and unfashionable. He had heard renowned Western architects and designers such as Bruno Taut, Charlotte Perriand, Antonin Raymond, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Richard Neutra complain that the Japanese were indifferent to the great value of their ancient art. Having the knowledge of this criticism, Hasegawa still thought, "Of course there is no reason to think that we must regard our own cultural heritage in the same way as these blue-eyed artists." It was the Japanese, Hasegawa believed, who should decide what they should preserve and develop in order to become competent and respected in the international art community.[24] "However," he added, "even if not to the same degree as these visitors, at the very least we have a responsibility to consider the way we think about ancient Japan." When the Japanese art world began to think of how to best utilize traditional knowledge in the context of modernism, Hasegawa found it appropriate that he sought advice from Noguchi: "Of all these people [who have asserted the importance of traditional Japanese art], Isamu Noguchi seems to

[22] Saburo Hasegawa, "Isamu Noguchi: hito to sakuhin" [Isamu Noguchi: the person and work"], in the 1950 Mitsukoshi exhibit catalogue, Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York.
[23] Hasegawa, "Isamu Noguchi to no hibi," 7–9.
[24] This and the rest of the quotes in this paragraph are from Hasegawa, "Isamu Noguchi: hito to sakuhin."

possess an even deeper understanding of Japan's ancient culture, in part because of his father, and in part because of his desire to explore the newest forms of abstract Japan." Compared to other European and American cultural producers who found special values in ancient Japan, Hasegawa emphasized the importance of Noguchi's biological ties with the Japanese nation in accepting his help in Japanese artists' endeavors to rediscover their cultural significance and to be competent in overseas art markets where modernism was dominant. Hasegawa would not simply accept white Euro-American architects' and designers' judgment about Japanese blindness to their own important tradition. This implied Hasegawa's essentialistic idea that these people were not truly capable of understanding Japanese tradition either because of their sheer foreignness. On the other hand, Noguchi, who was a son of a famous Japanese father and an American mother, was supposed to be better at both respecting Japanese tradition and employing the creativity of Western civilization.

Hasegawa believed in Noguchi's understanding of Japanese art and his ability to bring the field to a higher level because he found Noguchi's work to be "*nihon-teki*," or imbued with uniquely Japanese characteristics.[25] He identified three aspects in Noguchi's work that constituted Japanese characteristics. First, Hasegawa found that Noguchi brought out the natural beauty in his material—be it clay or stone—with his deep and honest affection to it, which was a common practice he had seen in Japanese art's long tradition. Secondly, in Hasegawa's opinion, Noguchi's work was smart and simple, but not cold, as was the case for many modernist works; its "gentle tenderness" was familiar to him and thus was "*nihon-teki*." Noguchi's works were identified as Japanese for boasting gentle curves as opposed to "cold" modernist works that often exhibited severe straight lines. Lastly, Noguchi's ultimate concern was to make a beautiful space

[25] This and the rest of the quotes in this paragraph are from Saburo Hasegawa, "Noguchi nihon" [Noguchi Japan], *Bijutsu techo* 33 (August 1950): 58–60.

through the use of sculpture. He sought out the best form and volume for each of his sculptures to improve the space where it was to be placed. Hasegawa noted that the keen consciousness of the space that Noguchi's work embodied was common to Japanese architecture, gardens, flower arrangements, and even paintings that were sensitive to the effect of blank space. Hasegawa believed, "the more an artist used an international 'language of formative art,' the clearer their *minzoku* and cultural tradition manifested themselves." In other words, Hasegawa thought that an artist's *minzoku* and cultural background influenced their work without fail even if they used seemingly borderless modern abstract expressions. To Hasegawa, Noguchi's work "was frighteningly modern and yet possessed calm, gentle *sabi* [a quality of beauty that stems from age]," which to him revealed the artist's Japaneseness. Calling the mixed-race artist "Noguchi the Japanese," Hasegawa claimed Noguchi's place within the discourses of Japanese race, ethnicity, culture, and nation.

The features of Noguchi's work that Hasegawa deemed "*nihon-teki*" were not necessarily unique to Japanese aesthetics and values. However, by defining the positive features of Noguchi's work as Japanese, Hasegawa could claim Noguchi's work as a part of Japanese art's genealogy and create the impression that both Noguchi's work and Japanese art represented important values, such as sensitivities to nature, humanism, and space, which were arguably being overshadowed by the mechanic, rational, and functionalist systems of highly industrialized Western societies.

Another artist, Genichiro Inokuma, wrote not only about the Japaneseness he sensed in Noguchi's art but also about the mixed-race artist's foreignness he perceived in his behavior. Like Hasegawa, Inokuma had met Noguchi in the first few days of his stay in Japan in May 1950 and took a great care of him—accommodating him, feeding him, and taking him around.

Inokuma became one of Noguchi's closest allies throughout the rest of his life. Even though Inokuma was an intimate friend, Noguchi's fierce working style appeared very foreign and perplexing to him. Inokuma saw Noguchi absorbed in sculpturing all day without even eating and socializing with others. Inokuma described that when Noguchi was at work, he was "cold-hearted" toward the people around him and would not waste time on chatting with them. Noguchi was "extremely selfish" and "never to make any compromises." In Inokuma's eyes, Noguchi's self-centered behavior marked him "thoroughly as a foreigner."[26]

Despite Noguchi's foreignness, Inokuma commented that Noguchi still had many things in common with "us," the Japanese people. Inokuma argued that Noguchi's works exhibited at the Mitsukoshi Department store fit perfectly with "our spiritual world." "Seeing his terracotta products on which he worked in Seto," Inokuma added, "I felt Japanese classics [embodied in his works] honestly, calmly, and humbly seep into our heart. Noguchi clearly displayed Japan in front of our eyes and demonstrated the way in which we should proceed internationally."[27] Inokuma also argued that even if foreign artists expressed "Japan," the end product didn't have "Japan," in contrast to Noguchi's, in terms of its spiritual content.[28] Inokuma used the term "Japan" to establish the idea of "authentic Japaneseness" that could not be appropriated by foreigners in the way that "Japanese design" often seemed to have been. This also suggested his belief that "Japan" was reserved only for the Japanese. Here, Inokuma reinforced both Japan's cultural uniqueness and the Japanese as an exceptional and distinct racial group that inherited it. In Inokuma's description, Noguchi was entitled to deep knowledge about and intimate affection to his fatherland's culture like no other foreign artists, and thus was treated specially to be

[26] Genichiro Inokuma, "Isamu Noguchi no sakuhin" [The work of Isamu Noguchi], *Kyoiku bijutsu* 11, no. 12 (1950): 8–9.
[27] Genichiro Inokuma, "Mu" [Nothingness], *Mizue* (October 1950): 14–21.
[28] Inokuma, "Isamu Noguchi," 1950.

included as a part of the "Japanese" people who could embody and express "Japan." Like Hasegawa, Inokuma contributed to shaping and emphasizing Noguchi's Japaneseness, rather than treating him as an outsider.

**Combining East and West in the Shin-Banraisha Project**

The combination of Noguchi's Japaneseness and his "gaze from without" was particularly useful for the purpose of Shin-Banraisha. Noguchi declared that he, as an artist with mixed racial and cultural backgrounds, would unify the "viewpoints of East and West" in this project like his father did in his poetry. Keio was a perfect site for Noguchi to express this vision of artistic harmony. The university, located in the central district of Tokyo, was originally founded by Yukichi Fukuzawa (1835-1901), the foremost advocate for the Westernization of Japan during the Meiji era. Fukuzawa was a part of the 1860 Kanrinmaru delegation to the United States, which was the first of many more official U.S.-Japan encounters to come. Fukuzawa was deeply influenced by the American ideologies of republicanism, democracy, and equality. He brought back books on these topics and used them as textbooks at his university.[29] After losing many of its students to World War II, the university hoped to become a leader of Japan's postwar democratization by reemphasizing the founder's visions. As an institution that had traditionally opened its door toward the West, it provided a suitable atmosphere for Noguchi to advocate for bringing in modernism to harmonize with the Japanese environment.

Commissioning renowned artists and architects to reconstruct and redecorate the war-torn campus was one way for Keio to demonstrate its belief in promoting democratic expressions and

[29] Shunsuke Kamei, "The Sacred Land of Liberty: Images of America in Nineteenth-Century Japan," in *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, ed. Akira Iriye (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 61.

activities. Noguchi's friend Inokuma created a mural entitled "Democracy," in which he imbued his desire for young students to "wing their ways toward the world of freedom."[30] Architect Yoshiro Taniguchi was selected to rebuild campus buildings including Banraisha, which had originally been established by Fukuzawa. Shin-Banraisha ("Shin" means "New") and the other buildings on campus were symbolic of Japanese recovery and technological Westernization. Taniguchi reflected, "Recovery efforts began amidst ashes, building barracks with what little construction materials we had. After that difficult period of time, now we have finally managed to build reinforced concrete structures."[31] In this remark, the use of Western construction materials and techniques was equated with progress. Taniguchi hoped that his collaboration with Noguchi on Shin-Banraisha would not only achieve functionality but also realize "a union between lifestyle and beauty" and provide an answer to the "search for poesies that have been lost from life."[32] Taniguchi received significant influence from Noguchi in coming to this thinking. In one article, Taniguchi cited Noguchi saying, "Modern society owed its progress to technology. However, we have to pay attention to the fact that the technological progress has two aspects. On one hand it brings convenience to our life, but on the other hand it takes away something. The responsibility of new art should be to supplement what is being lost from human life and make up for the loss."[33] When Western architecture's functionalism was being blamed for the loss of warmth and humanism, Taniguchi and Noguchi found it important to collaborate with each other to bring the pleasure of art back to improve the quality of everyday life. Through

[30] Genichiro Inokuma, Kozo Inoue, Masatomo Kawai, "Sannin kandan" [Conversation among three], *Mita hyoron* 928 (August 1991): 82–93, KUAC.
[31] Yoshiro Taniguchi, "Sculpture and Architecture," *Shinkenchiku* 25, no 10 (October 1950), quoted in Makiko Sugiyama, *Banraisha: Taniguchi Yoshiro to Isamu Noguchi no kyososhi* [Banraisha: Taniguchi Yoshiro and Isamu Noguchi's concerto] (Tokyo: Kashima shuppan kai, 2006), 67.
[32] Ibid.
[33] Taniguchi, "Bijutsu no atarashii kaitakusha," 19–20.

the Shin-Banraisha project, Noguchi confirmed his status as a modern artist with the rare ability to remedy the issue of standardization and homogenization by utilizing his knowledge on the Japanese sense of beauty.

Noguchi argued that Japan should stop imitating the West at the cost of its unique sensibilities to nature, space, and austerity that were the foundations of traditional Japanese artistry, which Westerners were beginning to respect. He wanted to show the Japanese how to combine Japanese traditional art forms with Western ideas without shedding the uniqueness of the former.[34] In talking to the Modern Artists Association of Nippon,[35] Noguchi said, "Japan had long been isolated from the world. And now, I came from the outside to here. Therefore, I can tell you about the outside world."[36] He added that the West had based its raison d'être on something material but now the West sought something more than materialism. He explained that contemporary Western paintings and architecture gained a lot of ideas from Japan and the East. By these remarks, Noguchi suggested that Japan and the East should cherish their precious non-material tradition, or spirituality, that the materialistic West tried to learn from. When Noguchi—like many others—grew skeptical about the equation of material abundance and emotional fulfillment, Zen's attitude toward *wabi* [a quality of austere beauty] seemed all the more significant to him.[37] He warned the Japanese that blindly absorbing everything Western

[34] Isamu Noguchi, "Watashi no mita Nippon" [Japan as I saw it], *Geijutsu shincho* 2, no. 10 (1951): 100–106.
[35] In Japan, the association was known as Nippon Avangyarudo Bijutsuka Kurabu [Avant-Garde Artists Association of Japan].
[36] "Isamu Noguchi shi nihon no avangyarudisuto to kataru" [Isamu Noguchi Talks with Japanese Avant-Gardists], *Atorie* 283 (August 1950): 32–33.
[37] Isamu Noguchi, "Kanga na Nippon Ryokou" [Quiet and graceful Japan trip], *Bungei shunju* 28, no. 12 (September 1950): 184–187.

would not make them modern. To be truly modern was, he said, "to be authentic and creative."[38] Noguchi tried to demonstrate this belief through his work for the Shin-Banraisha project.

For the interior of Shin-Banraisha he consciously adopted various shapes and materials that were associated with Japanese arts and crafts in his attempt to showcase how they harmonized with Taniguchi's Western-style building. He created wooden tables and chairs, rattan sofas, a terracotta-tiled wall, and a raised platform with a *tatami* mat. In the middle of the room was a fireplace that looked more like an *iori*, a traditional Japanese fireplace, because of its shape and location, rather than a conventional Western hearth. The most distinctive feature of the room was that its floor had three levels. The bottom level was paved with stone for people to walk around with their shoes on, the slightly elevated middle level was made of wood for sitting and walking without shoes (the shoes were to be left at the bottom level), and the highest level was the *tatami* platform. With a *tatami* mat, chairs, and sofas, one could sit both Japanese and Western ways.[39] His desire for the Japanese to respect both Japanese and Western cultures—and his understanding that the two cultures could coexist—was evident in this floor setting.

There were several other notable aspects of Shin-Banraisha that symbolized Noguchi's attempt to recontextualize Japanese traditional expressions in the modern environment. Noguchi provided the *tatami* platform with a *tokonoma* where he placed a *haniwa*, which he modeled after clay figurines from prehistoric times. To Taniguchi, Noguchi had mentioned that new Western architecture should also have a *tokonoma* where one could appreciate art.[40] Including a *tokonoma* in Shin-Banraisha indicated that Noguchi wanted to not only respect Japanese tradition but also

---

[38] Isamu Noguchi, "Geijutsu to shudan shakai" [Art and Community], *Bijutsu techo* 31 (July 1950): 5.
[39] Noguchi, "Watashi no mita Nippon," 102.
[40] Yoshiro Taniguchi, "Isamu Noguchi ten no tenji" [The display of the Isamu Noguchi exhibit], *Bijutsu techo* 35 (October 1950): 22.

suggest new cultural possibilities for Western architecture. Next to the *tokonoma* was a terracotta-tiled wall. The tiles bore various patterns of scratches. Here, Noguchi was testing his hand at artistic primitivism. As master artists such as Pablo Picasso and Paul Gauguin actively incorporated so-called "primitive" cultures' methods of expression into their own, the following generation of artists, primarily Abstract Expressionists, also paid great attention to the cultures of Others. Abstract Expressionists explored the primitive in hope of finding "a universal, ancient, and historical pattern to Everyman's existence" for the goal of representing "the fundamental of human life" in their art.[41] Noguchi was influenced by this contemporary movement, which was most evident in his remark in a 1960 interview. When the interviewer asked Noguchi what kind of art he liked, he said, "Actually, the older it is, the more archaic and primitive, the better I like it. I don't know why, but perhaps it's simply because the repeated distillation of art brings you back to the primordial: the monoliths, the cave paintings, the scratchings, the shorthand by which the earliest people tried to indicate their sense of significance."[42] By adding scratches to the terracotta tiles on a wall in Shin-Banraisha, he created his own version of primitive art. He took advantage of the project as an opportunity to experiment his "modern primitive"[43] style, which was also translated into his products such as *Akari*.

Three pieces of sculpture Noguchi created for the garden of Shin-Banraisha—*Gakusei* [*Student*], *Wakai Hito* [*Young Person*], and *Mu* [*Nothingness*]—best symbolized his hope to make the site a space for young minds to muse and thrive. His concepts for the first two works were evident. He mentioned, "The iron sculpture *Gakusei* rising into the blue sky is my

---

[41] Stephen Polcari, *Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 33–34.
[42] Kuh, *The Artist's Voice*, 186.
[43] Ryu Niimi, "Interia toiu yutopia: Kenmochi Isamu eno josho" [Utopia of interior: introduction to Kenmochi Isamu], in *Japanizu modan: Kenmochi Isamu to sono sekai* [*Japanese modern: Isamu Kenmochi and his world*], ed. Hitoshi Mori (Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 2007), 29.

dedication to aspiring youth."[44] He considered his commitment to the Shin-Banraisha project part of his "compensation" for the destruction of young people's childhood that had been eternally lost in the war and chaos. Through the sculpture, he expressed his wishes for their future. The surrealistic *Wakai Hito* was stylistically different from the more geometric *Gakusei*, but its title suggested that it was also meant for young Keio students. Expressing sympathies for the wounds of the war and wishes for a bright future, Noguchi played a much-needed role of embodying the bridge between the United States and Japan. Noguchi's reconciliatory work further pushed his father's nationalism and Japanese wartime history into the background.

In contrast to these two sculptures with palpable titles, the third sculpture had an ambiguous title, *Mu*, and Noguchi did not explain what exactly he meant by "*Mu*." According to Hasegawa, Noguchi appreciatively mentioned "nothingness" along with "scarcity" (as opposed to abundance) when the two men traveled Kyoto together.[45] Noguchi alluded to Zen, of which "nothingness" and "scarcity" are foundational concepts, when he compared Shin-Banraisha to "the beautiful Shi-Sen-Do [Zen temple] in Kyoto, and to the many other prototypes in China and elsewhere whose purpose has always been to invite mens [*sic*] souls to aspire."[46] It is possible to infer from this comment that Noguchi wanted to make Shin-Banraisha a meditative space with the use of his sculpture *Mu*. Instead of explaining what he meant by *Mu*, he described its carefully planned location in the garden: "The sight [from Shin-Banraisha] looks out onto the west where the setting sun silhouettes my sculpture 'Mu' making of it an ishidoro [stone lantern] of celestial illumination."[47] *Mu*'s shape was eye-catching; a large plaster ring was placed on top

[44] This and the rest of the quotes in this paragraph are from Isamu Noguchi, "Shigoto ni tsuite," 59.
[45] Saburo Hasegawa, "Noguchi Nihon," 59.
[46] Noguchi, "A Stage," 31.
[47] Isamu Noguchi, "Projects: Isamu Noguchi," *Arts and Architecture* 69 (June 1952): 26.

of a trapezoid pedestal. When the setting sun fit inside the ring, the sculpture resembled a stone lantern enclosing a burning candle at a temple.

*Mu*'s Zen-evoking title and its abstract form brought about controversy on how to interpret this artwork. Keio University professor Kiyoshi Ikeda expressed his doubt toward the value of the "philosophical" sculpture, sarcastically suggesting that it was comparable to an elementary school student's clay work. At the beginning of his short commentary in *Mainichi* newspaper, Ikeda noted that he knew few people whose names were written in *kana* [a Japanese system of syllabic writing which includes *hiragana* and *katakana*]. Noguchi's name was usually written in *katakana* (イサム・ノグチ), which was traditionally used for things and concepts originating abroad, although in some cases his name was written in *kanji* in the order of family name followed by given name (野口勇) to emphasize his Japanese paternal lineage. Expressing unfamiliarity with those whose names were written in *kana* was a way to highlight Noguchi's outsider status.

Ikeda went on to describe the sculpture as "a gigantic donut placed on top of a tall pudding,"[48] which indicated his dismissal of Noguchi's artistic rigor as something that can barely render anything substantial and serious. Reducing the sculpture into fluffy Western desserts added to Ikeda's emphasis on Noguchi's failure in accurately understanding the Zen spirit. Ikeda apparently based what he figured Noguchi's inadequacy to understand Zen on his foreignness that his name indicated. Ikeda concluded his commentary mentioning that even though Keio suffered financially because of the damage done by the war, he and others at Keio did not have to be so humble as to decorate the garden with a donated donut. This last remark indicated his opinion that Japan did not have to degrade itself to the extent that it accepted everything from the

[48] Kiyoshi Ikeda, "Tetsugaku teki chokoku" ["Philosophical Sculpture"], *Mainichi shimbun*, November 18, 1951.

West without using its own judgement and standards of beauty. By rendering Noguchi utterly foreign, Ikeda's opinion threatened to deny the artist's self-proclaimed role as an artistic bridge between East and West.

Professionals from different fields came together to defend Noguchi from such criticism. Whereas Ikeda highlighted Noguchi's Otherness, artists and critics emphasized how he was a part of "us." Architect Taniguchi, Noguchi's collaborator on Shin-Banraisha, was quick to rebut Ikeda's commentary in the same newspaper. Taniguchi considered it nonsense to try to understand a work of art merely from its title. Taniguchi also warned against dismissing the sculpture because of its unusual shape. He argued that it was important for art viewers to have child-like heart and sensibility to enjoy different forms of expressions. Moreover, he insisted, the Japanese had advantage in understanding modern art: "Our ancestors had great artistic sensibility; they loved primitive *haniwa* figurines; sacralized keyhole-shaped burial mounds; invented the beautiful *hiragana* style of writing. . . . The Japanese beauty, embodied in them, is directly related to modern art."[49] Taniguchi's point was that modern art's simplicity and clarity shared roots with a nostalgia for primitive times and that Japanese traditional forms had maintained the primitive beauty that was not found in modern Western civilization. "We should be aware of the pure and fresh blood of 'beauty' streaming in our blood vessels," Taniguchi asserted. He cautioned, "If people opposed modern art only because it is strange to them, Japanese art's blood cannot help but be clogged and dried up." Here, in an ethnocentric tone, Taniguchi rendered supposedly unique and undiluted Japanese "blood" and culture as one, and included Noguchi in the group of its privileged inheritors.

[49] Yoshiro Taniguchi, "'Mu' no tamashi" ["The Soul of 'Mu'"], *Mainichi shimbun*, November 30, 1951.

Taniguchi regarded Noguchi, who descended from a renowned Japanese father, as an important agent to preserve and develop Japanese culture. Even though the artist was an illegitimate child of Yonejiro Noguchi, Taniguchi and many others "legitimatized" Noguchi's racial and cultural ties with Japan through asserting the resonance between his and traditional Japanese art. Having witnessed European modernists taking advantage of primitive art forms of colonized Africa and Pacific Islands, Japanese cultural producers felt the need to secure authority over their own primitive art forms especially during the U.S. Occupation. Noguchi as an inheritor of Japanese tradition and a successful modern artist was deemed a suitable aide in demonstrating how the Japanese should be proud of their ancient forms of culture and how they could also become the skillful agents of their own modern primitivism.

Art critic Shuzo Takiguchi likewise argued that the Japanese should be able to understand Noguchi's art and that Noguchi was a part of "us." On seeing the model of *Mu* in 1950, he mentioned, "I think *Mu* embodies the way Noguchi understands Zen. It seems to me to symbolize Japan's spiritual position that desires perpetual peace." After hearing about Ikeda's criticism, Takiguchi mentioned that the Japanese, who enjoyed *haikai* [a generic term for Japanese poetic forms which include haiku] and humor, were well-positioned to understand Noguchi's work. He called out Ikeda and urged him to consider the fact that even a "donut" could be an interesting piece of sculpture. Like Taniguchi, Takiguchi suggested that a not-too-serious, light-hearted attitude was necessary to understand modern art, just like in the case of *haikai*. While the professor emphasized the enigmatic aspect of *Mu*, Takiguchi stressed the childlike, fun aspect of the artwork, thereby pointing out the playfulness of Noguchi's expression that shared commonalities with the tradition of longstanding Japanese art. Featuring the

enjoyable, playful side of *Mu* contributed to situating it in the genealogy of Japanese art and saved Noguchi and his work from being overly Othered.

Takiguchi expressed his approval for the fact that Noguchi deliberately chose not to simply appropriate Japanese culture. Noguchi occupied an "inherently advantageous position in terms of Orientalism," he mentioned, and believed that it should have been easy for Noguchi to produce a Japonism-type of art to achieve an economic success.[50] The artist, however, did not take that course. Takiguchi lauded how Noguchi absorbed substantial elements of Oriental art and elaborated them into his own expression. Moreover, Takiguchi argued that unlike "foreigners" who "snatched away" Japanese tradition and incorporated it into their own modernist work, Noguchi and his work felt closer to the Japanese and their culture because he was half-Japanese and spoke their language even though he was not fluent. Noguchi's Japanese lineage was reinforced thanks to the biological connection to his famous father. Speaking Japanese indicated that Noguchi was not completely out of touch with the Japanese national and cultural sphere. By pointing out Noguchi's biological, national, and cultural connections with Japan, Takiguchi endorsed Noguchi's unique membership to the Japanese art community.

Although Takiguchi recognized Noguchi's affiliation with the Japanese art community, he expressed reservations about the Japaneseness of Noguchi's art. He noted that "we cannot just say that it is *nihon-teki* [Japanese] without an annotation" even though it looked Japanese on the surface.[51]According to Takiguchi, there were "Western-style logic and non-logic" operating behind Noguchi's expression. Takiguchi suggested that after all, Noguchi's primary artistic

---

[50] This and the rest of the quotes in this paragraph are from Shuzo Takiguchi, "Gendai bunmei to no taiketsu: Isamu Noguchi o mite" ["Confrontation with modern civilization: seeing Isamu Noguchi"], *Yomiuri shimbun*, evening edition, October 15, 1952, KUAC.

[51] This and the rest of the quotes in this paragraph are from Shuzo Takiguchi, "Isamu Noguchi shoron" [An essay on Isamu Noguchi] (1952), in Shuzo Takiguchi, *Shiro to kuro no danso* [*White and black fragmentary thoughts*] (Tokyo: Genki shobo, 2011), 89.

idiom was Euro-American and that he was different from the Japanese who produced works that supposedly reflected Japanese aesthetic principles. Takiguchi emphasized the foreignness of Noguchi's way of conceiving art, which was implicitly contrasted with how Japanese-born artists trained in Japan would presumably produce art. In these commentaries, Noguchi's racial, ethnic, and cultural identities were complicated and thus hovered over the borders of Japaneseness. Takiguchi found Noguchi's connections with Japan important and remarkable, but they did not win Noguchi the status to compete on the same ground with Japanese artists trained under Japanese tradition.

Artist Taro Okamoto added another dimension to the *Mu* controversy through his 1952 article for *Geijutsu shincho*. In line with Taniguchi and Takiguchi, Okamoto saw that the confusion over Noguchi's work stemmed from people being too serious about modern art. Okamoto argued that *Mu* was nothing like a vulgar donut but something "far tastier and lighter."[52] Okamoto pointed out that Noguchi was partly to blame for the confusion, since he casually used the term "'Zen' which is a synonym of enigma and a keyword for mystification in our country." In Okamoto's view, Noguchi produced "smart" and "cosmopolitan" art, which had nothing to do with Zen. Okamoto explained that "nothingness" (*mu*) presupposes and confronts "existence" (*yu*), or "unrefined life" (*dorokusai seikatsu*). Artists, Okamoto believed, should engage with unrefined—and perhaps even ugly—sociality. Okamoto argued that Noguchi, who had a sophisticated cosmopolitan taste and extensive mobility, escaped dealing with the "mud of the reality" (*genjitsu no doro*) in a particular social context.

While Okamoto did not clearly explain what he meant by the "mud of the reality" in the above article, elsewhere he discussed specific social problems that the world encountered, which

[52] This and the rest of the quotes in this paragraph are from Taro Okamoto, "Isamu Noguchi no shigoto" ["Isamu Noguchi's Work"], *Bijutsu Techo* 63 (December1952): 43–44, KUAC.

he thought artists were responsible to address in their own work. For example, Okamoto mentioned that an "explosion of atomic bombs," a "confrontation of the two worlds," and a "bizarre economic depression" impacted the life of humanity and that artists' creative work could not exist in isolation from these concerns.[53] "Unless artists confront directly with these invisible but quite real matters and tear themselves apart," Okamoto warned, "they are definitely powerless in relation to the reality and even to art." Okamoto believed that art should be something "uncomfortable," forcing its audience to face inescapable social issues, and that Noguchi's smart and cosmopolitan art lacked the capacity to do so.

Judging Noguchi's lack of critical engagement with a particular society's issues and realities a source of his weakness, Okamoto suggested that Noguchi directly confront Japan's "mud" (*doro*), or unrefined social reality, as "野口勇" [Noguchi Isamu in *kanji*]. Okamoto criticized the situation in which "イサム・ノグチ" [Isamu Noguchi in *katakana*] was excessively celebrated and indulged as an international artist to the extent that his art was not seriously discussed. Okamoto thought that Noguchi had the ability to produce more socially critical art if he chose to do so. When Okamoto contrasted Noguchi's names in *kanji* and *katakana*, he implied that Noguchi's Japanese heritage gave him access to the unsophisticated, messy Japanese sociality, the confrontation with which he could pioneer the new frontier of his art. Through these commentaries, Okamoto urged Noguchi to ground his feet firmly on Japanese soil to engage with its issues and quit being a free-floating outsider. Here, Okamoto suggested the way in which Noguchi's Japanese racial and ethnic identities could be reinforced.

[53] This and the following quotes in this paragraph are from Taro Okamoto, "Jomon doki ron: yojigen to no taiwa" [An essay on Jomon earthenware: conversation with the fourth dimension] (1952), reprinted in *Bijutsu techo* 52 (September 2000): 66.

Okamoto was shrewdly aware that Noguchi's cosmopolitanism led people like Ikeda, who were disgusted with the rise of Western culture in Japan, to criticize him. Taniguchi tried to save Noguchi from the criticism by associating his work with "*minzoku bunka*." Takiguchi also separated Noguchi from other Westerners and pointed out similarities between Noguchi's and traditional Japanese art, thereby attempting to deemphasize Noguchi's cosmopolitanism to some extent. Being part of the cultural elite, Okamoto, Taniguchi, and Takiguchi themselves faced the task of balancing their commitment to "*minzoku bunka*" and their interest in cosmopolitanism. By defending Noguchi, they were also protecting themselves against a potential accusation that their works were cosmopolitan in nature and irrelevant to the Japanese social reality. They asserted Noguchi's place in the discourse of "*minzoku*" not so much for his sake as for their own.

When Noguchi met with the influential Japanese cultural producers mentioned above, he also came to know Japan's most important modern architect Kenzo Tange. Tange asked Noguchi to design a cenotaph to be dedicated to the victims of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. Noguchi readily accepted the offer. However, in 1952, the Hiroshima Peace Memorial City Construction Committee rejected Noguchi's design without a clear explanation, although Tange told him that the decision probably had to do with his being an American.[54]

Tange's superior, Hideto Kishida, was the key person in making this decision. Being a part of the committee, Kishida opposed Noguchi's involvement in designing the cenotaph. In his 1958 book, Kishida recounted what he told the committee: "The Japanese has to design the cenotaph that is the center of this important memorial, no matter what. Kenzo Tange, a young architect with a rare ability, won the competition [to design the memorial], and he should be putting his heart and soul into designing the cenotaph. Why on earth would we want to ask

[54] Letter, Isamu Noguchi to John Collier, February 4, 1953, "Project Series: Hiroshima Memorial for the Dead, 1951–1953," folder 1, Noguchi Museum.

American sculptor Isamu Noguchi to work on it?"[55] In the same book, Kishida mentioned, "Don't forget that America dropped the atomic bombs, and Isamu Noguchi is an American." Kishida implied that designing the cenotaph was not merely an artistic undertaking; it came with the social obligation to soothe the souls of the dead on behalf of the nation. In Kishida's eyes, Noguchi could neither represent the Japanese nation nor provide art that would accurately address the particular social reality it served. Even though Kishida thought that an international collaboration between Tange and Noguchi would be fine, it was not appropriate for the purpose of the cenotaph. Kishida defined the cenotaph designing project as an important responsibility to fulfill for "*minzoku*" rather than for cosmopolitans.

Okamoto regretted that the Hiroshima city authorities, in accordance with the committee's decision, turned down Noguchi's cenotaph plan. Unlike Kishida, who was primarily concerned about how the Hiroshima Peace Park project could contribute to consoling the Japanese, Okamoto believed that Hiroshima had a larger role to play. For him, Hiroshima occupied a special place in the world and that Noguchi was the most suitable artist to produce a monument for a project fraught with important symbolic meaning for the entire international community. Okamoto sharply criticized the city authorities' provincialism and their lack of understanding the world, which he believed had been the cause for the atomic bombing. While Okamoto blamed "ignorant city officials" for their poor decision, he also argued that Noguchi's art was partly to blame for not having enough realism to overwhelm them and the public.[56] Thus, Okamoto pointed out both the strength and weakness of Noguchi's cosmopolitan art.

[55] Quoted in Kenzo Tange and Terunobu Fujimori, *Tange Kenzo* (Tokyo: Shinkenchikusha, 2002), 153.
[56] Okamoto, "Isamu Noguchi no shigoto," 43–44.

When the committee informed Noguchi of its decision to not adopt his design plan, it euphemized Kishida's comments. The reasons for the rejection Noguchi received were that the sculpture "was too abstract," that ordinary citizens could not understand it, that "it would not fit in with ceremony," and that it was "too expensive." Noguchi felt that it was not ordinary citizens but those with power and interest who were not willing to accept his art. Moreover, he found the argument about the high cost of the sculpture illogical, since the staff had checked it all along the planning process. Noguchi wrote these details to a draft of his letter to John Collier, Commissioner for the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration. Collier was a rare bureaucratic figure who sympathized with Noguchi on the importance of art in the incarceration camps and arranged his voluntary incarceration at Poston. The shared understanding on the important link between art and democracy kept them in contact for years after the war. In the margins of the draft, Noguchi scribbled, "and I am outsider," and crossed it out. It indicated Noguchi's frustration over being treated differently because of his foreignness and his hesitation to completely admit that he did not have a place in projects critical for Japan's future. The list of the reasons for rejection did not convince him. What Noguchi got out of it was the message that he was ultimately an unwelcome guest when it came to the sensitive issue of building a monument for atomic bomb victims.[57]

The rejection of Noguchi's design served as a bitter reminder for Noguchi that he, as a mixed-race American citizen, was never allowed to enter certain terrains of Japanese history and memory making.[58] Noguchi's partial whiteness, which marked him as a foreigner, as well as his American nationality worked against him in this particular case. Because Noguchi could not

[57] Letter, Isamu Noguchi to John Collier.
[58] For further discussion on Noguchi's cenotaph design and the controversy surrounding it, see Bert Winther, "The Rejection of Isamu Noguchi's Hiroshima Cenotaph: A Japanese American Artist in Occupied Japan," *Art Journal* 53, no. 4 (December 1994): 23–27.

claim to be "fully" Japanese, he maintained his position as a cosmopolitan artist, going against Okamoto's advice to plant his feet in the reality of Japanese society as a Japanese and confront it head on.

**Producing "Japanese Modern" Design as a Cosmopolitan**

While his foreignness worked to his disadvantage in the case of the Hiroshima cenotaph project, it gave him a symbolic advantage vis-à-vis Japanese artists and designers who had been taught through the war and defeat that Japan's backwardness needed a reform in order for the country to be on par with Western modernity. In 1954, industrial designer Isamu Kenmochi wrote an influential article promoting "Japanese modern" products, in which he referred to Noguchi's design as a model for Japanese cultural producers to be more competitive in the international arena. Kenmochi believed that it was important to establish "Japanese modern" which was comparable to "Swedish modern," a collective label for high-quality designs from Sweden. Like Hasegawa and Inokuma, Kenmochi reinforced the importance of Noguchi's Japanese "blood" for understanding Japanese tradition well; at the same time, he emphasized that Noguchi had a "higher perspective."[59] Because Noguchi lived and worked in multiple communities and locations, Kenmochi believed, his imagination and sensitivities were free from the confines of culture and nation and he could see and think beyond borders. Kenmochi felt that Noguchi was most well-positioned of all foreign visitors to demonstrate how Japanese art and design can be utilized to attract a greater number of potential consumers in overseas markets

[59] This and the rest of the quotes in this paragraph are from Isamu Kenmochi, "Kogei shidosho ni okeru Isamu Noguchi" [Isamu Noguchi at the Industrial Arts Research Institute], *Kogei nyusu* [*Industrial news*] 18, no. 10 (October 1950): 19–23, reprinted and translated into English under the title, "Isamu Noguchi as I See Him," in Bonnie Rychlak et al., *Design: Isamu Noguchi and Isamu Kenmochi* (New York: Five Ties Pub, 2007), 129–133.

without losing its uniqueness, which was its scarcity value. He mentioned, "I was convinced that Noguchi, out of all foreign visitors, is the one to truly understand Japanese art, who can make art founded upon Japanese soil and still be so international." This comment reflected Kenmochi's belief that Noguchi's special background was an important asset for the Japanese in promoting wider recognition of the exceptional and authentic value of their art.

Noguchi's partial whiteness as well as Japaneseness served as a justification for Kenmochi's argument about Noguchi's superiority as a purveyor of "Japanese modern." Noguchi's "higher perspective" and mobility were part of the traditional privilege of cosmopolitan whites. As Bruce Robbins, Pheng Cheah, and Walter Mignolo note, cosmopolitanism, which is derived from Kosmo-polites ("world citizen" in Greece), was first associated with European merchants and Christian missionaries, who were often the harbingers of capitalism, Enlightenment, and colonialism in the eighteenth century.[60] In the context of postwar Japan, the white occupiers played a role that was not unlike those of European merchants and missionaries. They arrived with Western values, armed with the appeal of affluence and power. While Noguchi's personal ties with Japan and his semi-membership to the Japanese art community differentiated him from U.S. military and government personnel, Noguchi was closer to them in terms of privilege than to the Japanese public. Noguchi's partial whiteness symbolically associated him with the group of the privileged.

Noguchi's partial whiteness was significant precisely because it accompanied his Japaneseness. This fact became most apparent when Kenmochi compared Noguchi with architect

---

[60] Bruce Robbins, "Introduction Part I: Actually Existing Cosmopolitanism" and Pheng Cheah, "Introduction Part II: The Cosmopolitical-Today" in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation,* eds. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); Walter Mignolo, "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism" *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 721–748.

Bruno Taut and designer Charlotte Perriand, who both visited Japan's Industrial Arts Institute where Kenmochi worked and later served as director. Taut and Perriand suggested new designs based on Japanese traditional materials, techniques, and forms that were simple and functional. Having observed their activities closely by their side, Kenmochi still "found that Noguchi had a far greater ability to realize" what Taut and Perriand aimed to do. He argued that the "energetic sensibility that filled his pieces touched our souls, with or without explanation. It may be interpreted as a resonance of senses." He thought that compared to Perriand's furniture design, Noguchi's "was more relaxing to us, and especially to us Japanese. We felt as if it was our own."[61] While Noguchi was still a visitor like Taut and Perriand, his work had the quality that touched and calmed Japanese souls. Kenmochi did not have specific reasons to logically support this claim. Privileging Noguchi over the white European architect and designer reflected his internal desire to attribute exclusive knowledge about Japanese sensibilities to those of Japanese heritage. Kenmochi suggested that it was not easy to follow Noguchi's example but that the Japanese should try: "There is a major difference between Noguchi and us. He has a broader and higher outlook that is worldly. The more you remove yourself from a thing, the more accurately you will know its value. Noguchi sees the world's cultural heritage from a high viewpoint. … The past gets renewed through his originality as totally new art."[62] Thus, Kenmochi emphasized the importance of both Noguchi's Japaneseness and his transnational mobility and viewpoint that were traditionally associated with whiteness, the combination of which supposedly resulted in Noguchi's rare ability to represent both Japan and the West.

While Kenmochi believed in Noguchi's ability to develop Japanese art and design, he also believed that the Japanese should recover their authority over their own cultural sphere. He

[61] Kenmochi, "Kogei shidosho," 21.
[62] Ibid., 23.

derisively referred to the "Japonica style," or the poor imitation of Japanese traditional artistic forms, which "infested" Western houses and shops.[63] He lamented that "Japonica objects," for example "cheap, shiny fake antiques, flimsy lacquered music boxes, and metal lacquerware covered with decoration" were ubiquitous, exhibiting nothing worthy of being called "design." "For us Japanese," these Japonica-style products "cannot be endorsed," he warned. He added, "They are imitations without nationality." Even the noted designer T. H. Robsjohn-Gibbings, the founder of Widdicomb, produced Japonica in Kenmochi's eyes. He acknowledged that Robsjohn-Gibbings studied Japanese design extensively and that "his purpose was not to duplicate, but to extract only the necessary out of Japanese traditions," being successful in creating "a style that fits the Western lifestyle." "However," he noted, "the expression of this work is not always straightforward and honest." By this remark, he indicated that although Robsjohn-Gibbings did understand certain aspects of Japanese traditions, he could not internalize its aesthetics to translate it into his own artistic idioms. In this sense, his designs remained copies of styles that were not "straightforward and honest." He suggested that Robsjohn-Gibbings was a good learner, but still an outsider of Japanese traditions, and thus was unable to make Japanese expressions his own.

Kenmochi's evaluation of Noguchi was extraordinarily positive compared to that of Robsjohn-Gibbings. He especially liked Noguchi's paper lanterns named *Akari*, which brought him a huge success as an artist and designer in American and European markets. He mentioned that they "were inspired by Japanese paper lanterns, but there is no copying of the traditional style. Only the material, techniques, and function have been extracted, put into an original

[63] The quotes in this and the next paragraphs are from Isamu Kenmochi, "Japanizu modan ka Japonica sutairu ka" [Japanese Modern or Japonica Style], *Kogei nyusu* [*Industrial news*] 22, no. 9 (September 1954): 2–7, reprinted and translated into English by Eiko Sakai in Bonnie Rychlak et al., *Design: Isamu Noguchi and Isamu Kenmochi* (New York: Five Ties Pub, 2007), 139–143.

contemporary design." Moreover, he emphasized the significance of the origin of this line of product: "This is born of the Japanese climate, and it is an industrial design that can only be made in Japan." He added that George Nakashima's furniture was another "great example of Japanese Modern Design." He urged "Japanese designers with Japanese nationality" to learn from the models provided by these "Japanese with American nationality." The emphasis was implicitly placed on the "Japanese" ethnicity—regardless of their nationality, it was suggested, they were both better positioned for Japanese modern design than their white counterparts. He believed that Noguchi showcased how cosmopolitanism and Japaneseness could harmonize rather than contradict each other, thereby showing a model for Japanese artists and designers in maintaining the balance between their heritage and a worldly outlook and carving their ways into overseas markets.

**Noguchi's Negotiation with "Japaneseness"**

While Kenmochi included Noguchi's work in the category of "Japanese modern" and stressed Noguchi's Japanese lineage as well as cosmopolitanism, Noguchi himself maintained his status as not belonging to a particular nation or a particular group, Japanese or American. In his 1960 article for *Geijutsu shincho* he mentioned, "I grew up in America, but I am not an American."[64] He did not identify fully with "America" as a national or cultural entity. He explained that when he was younger, he wondered where his home was and longed for the Japan of his childhood. He returned to Japan in 1930 only to find it was not the home he had ardently quested for. Neither was the "small world" of the American art establishment worthy of his full commitment. Noguchi determined that his field was the world and that he should continue his

[64] This and the rest of the quotes in this paragraph are from Isamu Noguchi, "Sekai ni niwa o tsukuru," 72.

pilgrimage to different places in search for inspiration. By choosing to evade strict national categorization, Noguchi was able to maintain his flexible affiliations with art circles, practices, and thoughts across national borders.

By emphasizing the distances that he felt from both "America" and "Japan," he sought to maintain his ambiguous status so that he could own a legitimate "gaze from without." Noguchi mentioned that people who are rooted in a particular place might not be able to view that space objectively. On the contrary, he, as a "homeless child" with a "foreigner's eyes," was better positioned to know the true characteristics of that space.[65] Noguchi thus created his identity as a unique artist equipped with a sharp sense of space, which was fundamental to the particular work that he did; described in his words, it was the "sculpturing of space" and enhancing the "totality of the experience" of space through artwork and landscaping.[66]

While he maintained his "gaze from without," he also emphasized his deep understanding of Japanese spirituality exemplified in traditional gardens, which added to his ability as a sculptor of space. In Kyoto's gardens, he discovered tranquil, tucked-away spaces that were physically small yet felt unlimited. Although he enjoyed himself in these spaces, he found that Kyoto's gardens were aristocratic and that Japan did not have democratic spaces that were equivalently significant and were meant for the common people. Compared to the situation in Japan, European cities had plazas that functioned as democratic spaces. Those plazas, however, did not seem to him to have the spirituality that Japanese gardens embodied. Noguchi thus set his goal at making democratic and spiritual spaces in the world.[67] Implicit in this declaration of combining democracy and spirituality was the self-awareness that he was uniquely positioned to

[65] Ibid., 74.
[66] Noguchi, "New Stone Gardens," 84.
[67] Noguchi, "Sekai," 79.

be able to harmonize his "higher perspective" as a cosmopolitan and his particular racial and ethnic consciousness.

The 1964 Marble Garden for Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book Library in New Haven, Connecticut was an example of his attempt at making such spaces. The library could be seen as elitist rather than democratic because of the prestigious university it is part of. However, Noguchi still assumed his garden's prospective visitors would be people who "look at old books," not necessarily limited to Yale researchers and students, thus preserving the significance of his work for the general public.[68] Noguchi regarded "sculpture as a vital function of our environment," and he aimed to express the importance of art in everyday life through creating a "dramatic landscape" in the public space of a library.[69] Because Noguchi had seen how the meditative purpose of his own UNESCO garden got lost as sightseers increased, he made this garden a self-contained space that preserved tranquility for souls to explore imaginatively.[70]

Three symbolic parts, which were in the shapes of a pyramid, a cube, and a circular disc, dominated the view of the stunning white marble garden. In Noguchi's words, the pyramid stood for "the earth," or "the past."[71] The circular disc symbolized the sun, or a ring of radiating energy as "the source of all life." Noguchi also suggested an alternative way to look at it: "The circle is zero, the decimal zero, or the zero of nothingness from which we come and to which we return." Reminiscent of *Mu*, the circular disc reflected his longstanding interest in Zen philosophy and his hope to demonstrate his ability in creating a sanctuary for spirituality in a secular building. The cube, which balanced on one corner, signified "chance, like the rolling of dice." Its

---

[68] Ibid.
[69] Noguchi, "New Stone Gardens," 84.
[70] Noguchi, "Sekai," 79–80.
[71] This and the rest of the quotes in this paragraph are from Noguchi, "New Stone Gardens," 84, 89.

precariousness embodied unpredictable "human condition." The representations of the earth, the sun, and the man-made dice together formed a theater that evoked constant interaction between nature and humanity that transcended spatial and temporal boundaries. The three sculptures' relationships with one another, in addition to their shapes and sizes, were carefully calculated so that they integrated with "the topography as a whole." As a result of the minute planning, Noguchi believed, "the totality of the experience so controlled adds up to more than the sum of its parts."

Apparently Noguchi gained inspiration for this garden from various sites he had visited, but he never clearly specified sources. Dore Ashton argues that in addition to Japanese gardens, Noguchi remembered the Jaipur astronomical observatory where he saw giant geometric instruments that roughly looked like a triangle, a circle, and a cube, and Italy's piazzas with beautiful paving patterns.[72] Instead of alluding to these places, he mentioned, "The landscape [of the Beinecke garden] is purely that of the imagination; it is nowhere, yet somehow familiar. Its size is fictive, of infinite space, or cloistered containment."[73] Noguchi emphasized the anonymity of the garden so it would not be connected to any localities but maintain a more cosmopolitan profile. At the same time, he was successful in giving the space a spiritual meaning because of the unuttered yet implicit connection between one of its sculptures and Japanese Zen Buddhism. Through this space, he exhibited what he considered an amalgamation of democratic cosmopolitanism and Japanese spirituality.

In addition to the garden for the Beinecke Library, the 1960s saw the completions of the Plaza for First National Bank (Fort Worth, Texas, 1961), the Fountain for John Hancock Insurance Company (New Orleans, 1962), the Garden for Chase Manhattan Bank Plaza (New

[72] Ashton, *Noguchi East and West*, 179.
[73] Noguchi, "New Stone Gardens," 84.

York, 1964), the Gardens for Headquarters of IBM (Armonk, New York, 1964), and the Sculpture Gardens for the National Museum (Jerusalem, Israel, 1965), to name only the major architectural projects that Noguchi cared to mention in his 1968 autobiography. In what were often considered as commercialized, materialistic, or bland spaces of corporate buildings, Noguchi installed sculptures and fountains in trying to generate a poetic atmosphere (see chapter two for further discussion on the "poetic"). Just like Japanese artists received ideas from Noguchi on how to develop their art to make it competitive in the marketplace, Noguchi took advantage of his connections with Japan and Japanese artists in legitimatizing the spiritual content of his art and space, which became a critical selling point that enabled him to successfully acquire lucrative commissions in the United States and beyond.

**Conclusion**

The last two years of the U.S. Occupation of Japan coincided with Noguchi's deep engagement with Japanese art circles. Louise Allison Cort and Bert Winther-Tamaki rightly argue that Noguchi's visit had a major impact on virtually all fields of art in the country,[74] where cultural producers desired inspiration that could not be contained by GHQ's censorship and restrictions on travel. His influence was particularly noticeable in the fields of art, architecture, and industrial design. Noguchi acted as both an insider and outsider of these fields. As an insider, he demonstrated his deep appreciation toward Japanese spirituality and embodied the openness and progressiveness of Japanese art circles. As an outsider, he utilized his "gaze from without" and suggested original ways to translate Japanese traditional methods of artistic expression into modern products and landscapes, which were not limited by conventional aesthetic principles.

[74] Allison Cort and Winther-Tamaki, *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics*.

Noguchi's involvement in Japanese art circles revealed the fluid nature of the discursively constructed boundaries of race, ethnicity, culture, and nation. Noguchi's close friends included him as a part of "*minzoku*," stressing the "blood" he inherited from his father, while skeptics stressed his and his work's foreignness, cosmopolitanism, and irrelevance to the Japanese social reality. Those who deemed Noguchi's example helpful in justifying the combination of Japanese art and Western modernism asserted Noguchi's belonging, while those who associated Noguchi with Western hegemonic presence denied his belonging. Occasionally, the same people asserted and denied Noguchi's Japaneseness in different contexts. Noguchi's ambiguous status was convenient for claiming the flexibility or rigidity of the imagined boundaries of Japaneseness according to specific circumstances. The artist negotiated those forces to make the most of the affiliation with Japan while preserving his nomadic and cosmopolitan image.

## Conclusion

When Isamu Noguchi, George Nakashima, and Minoru Yamasaki engaged in high-profile projects and established their names as popular Nisei designers in the post-World War II period, many journalists and critics were compelled to write not only about their products but also about their unique personal backgrounds. Unlike their Euro-American counterparts who could occupy mainstream status in the art and architectural worlds and claim what Amy Lyford calls a "universal" point of view,[1] the three Nisei men were often labeled "Japanese," "Oriental," or "exotic." They had to constantly negotiate these labels so that they and their works would not be situated outside the realm of American culture. In one way or another, their works aimed to address issues inherent in modern American society, such as an overemphasis on functionalism. To be taken seriously in this effort, they had to demonstrate that they were important actors in American culture and society—rather than outsiders—who cared about the country's future.

The great attention paid to their life stories as Nisei served both as an advantage and a risk in promoting their businesses. It served as an advantage, since it brought more customers who sought not only great products but also great stories behind them. The widespread skepticism on materialism and mass consumption practices prompted a growing number of people, especially those who belonged to the upper social strata, to make virtuous choices about things they incorporated into their lifestyles. Noguchi's, Nakashima's, and Yamasaki's works were a good match for the trend, since they were, according to the producers themselves, designed to supplement the poetic, spiritual, and emotional dimension of American culture. As cultural diversity became an increasingly important part of American national identity during the Civil Rights Movement and after, the three Nisei men took advantage of their Japanese

[1] Lyford, *Isamu Noguchi's Modernism*, 161.

American heritage to establish their positions as critical thinkers who could provide comparative views on American and other cultures.

The Nisei's model minority narrative—a story that they became successful and respected cultural producers through their untiring efforts—added values to their productive activities and justified consumers' decisions to invest in them. Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki benefitted from their positive media representations in which the self-help and meritocracy that they supposedly exemplified were praised as a model for other Americans and immigrants to follow. At the same time, however, they also rejected being the quiet and obedient model minority and spoke out against U.S. racism. These actions indicated that they actively engaged in shaping stories about their own lives and works where they emphasized not only their achievements but also their marginalized status in American society.

While their Japanese ancestry was a cause for blatant hostility during World War II, it became an important factor for Noguchi and Yamasaki in playing the role of the cultural ambassador in the 1950s. For the sake of representing the bridge between the East and the West, they combined Japanese motifs with Western modernist aesthetics in their ambassadorial projects. While they accommodated the professional expectation to represent a harmony between East and West, they also took advantage of being abroad and expanding their horizons to question the white-dominated nature of the American art and architectural worlds. Thus, Cold War Orientalism gave rise to unexpected results; it empowered minorities in the United States, such as Noguchi and Yamasaki, to point out how Euro-American norms and standards limited ways of artistic and architectural expression in the country.

The attention their ethnic and racial identities attracted not only brought Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki commissions but also placed them at the risk of being Othered. As the

American public became fascinated with Japanese culture, which came to be seen in a positive light after the former enemy country was defeated and politically subsumed under American hegemony, demands for "authentic" Japanese art and architecture increased. The Nisei, because of their ancestry, were often expected to produce "Japanese" products and designs. They emphasized that their works were not copies of their ancestor's works but truly original in composition, as they reinterpreted their ancestral land's traditions in their own ways based on their Euro-American training in modernism.

The popularity of their works in the United States landed them commissions in Japan as well. In 1964, internationally known Japanese sculptor Masayuki Nagare invited Nakashima to join Sanuki Minguren, a short-lived association of designer-craftsmen based in Kagawa, Japan. Nakashima began interacting with local artisans and teaching his woodworking methods to them. Along with designing a Catholic church in Kyoto, he produced furniture with new designs inspired by Japan's arts and crafts, on which he collaborated with Kagawa's artisans. Sakura Seisakusho, a company founded by some of Nakashima's closest associates in Japan, remains the only place that holds a license to produce Nakashima-designed furniture outside New Hope.[2] Yamasaki concentrated largely on projects in the Middle East after the completion of the World Trade Center, but he also found opportunities to design a hotel in Tokyo in the mid-1970s and the Founder's Hall of Shinji Shumeikai, a religious group based in Shiga, in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The shape of the latter building is reminiscent of Mt. Fuji, which is a reminder of the architect's view that nature is an important part of everyday life, including religious practices. While Nakashima's and Yamasaki's workmanships and expressions that showed their respect for Japanese culture and nature raised some interest among Japanese art and architectural

[2] Nakashima, *Nature, Form & Spirit*, 190–199.

communities, the amount of attention they drew from the Japanese media was incomparable to what Noguchi garnered.

The special circumstances under the U.S. Occupation of Japan, which was still in place when Noguchi visited the country in the early 1950s, are the reason why Noguchi earned much more fanfare. As Shunya Yoshimi discusses, the U.S. Occupation forces instilled the Japanese with the virtues of progress, modernity, and the American way of life not only through public policy but also through their luxurious housing, material affluence, and leisurely activities.[3] Like the white male actors who symbolized the victory of Western civilization and ideologies in wartime and post-World War II Hollywood movies,[4] the largely white American occupiers set examples of the middle-class lifestyle that the Japanese were expected to replicate. While Noguchi's background as a son of a famous Japanese poet distinguished him from the American military and government personnel, he had privileges similar to theirs because of his American heritage. Japanese art circles looked up to Noguchi because he had an aura of cosmopolitanism, which owed no small part to his partial whiteness. During the time when America became the model for the political, cultural, and economic reconstruction of Japan, the Japanese began to view the occupiers' whiteness as a symbol of American superiority.

As I illustrated in chapter four, a close look at Noguchi's intensive activities in Japan in the early postwar years revealed an aspect of Cold War Orientalism that has not been fully examined in previous studies. As Noguchi engaged with various groups in Japan, Japanese artists intervened in the workings of Cold War Orientalism to secure their position as authentic creators of Japanese art and negotiate the force of Westernization that could potentially undermine the

[3] Shunya Yoshimi, "'America' as Desire and Violence: Americanization in Postwar Japan and Asia during the Cold War," *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4, no. 3 (2003): 439–440.
[4] Hiroshi Kitamura, *Screening Enlightenment: Hollywood and the Cultural Reconstruction of Defeated Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), chapter five.

existing hierarchical structure. Japanese artists felt the need to maintain their status in the larger global art market, which was now opening up to them, by taking advantage of the expanded economic opportunities for themselves, while keeping their works' relevance to the Japanese social reality.

Because of the Japanese "blood" he inherited from his father and the expectation that he should be able to share knowledge on how to be successful in Western art markets, Noguchi was enthusiastically welcomed into the Japanese art world. Japanese cultural producers expected Noguchi, a fellow artist of part-Japanese ancestry, to represent the uniqueness of Japanese culture to an international audience; they also hoped that Noguchi, who came from the United States, would show them ingenious ways to combine Japanese artistic idioms and Western modernist expressions. He was sometimes treated as an insider who understood Japanese aesthetics deep in his heart thanks to his heritage, and other times rendered as an outsider who provided a foreigner's view on what the Japanese took for granted or could not see. In other words, while Japanese artists often emphasized Noguchi's Japanese heritage and his racial and ethnic ties to them, they occasionally pointed out his foreignness to maintain their privilege as "authentic" artists and advocate their culture's exceptionality, which was not supposed to be completely comprehended or replicated by foreigners. Noguchi in turn took advantage of the fluctuating boundaries of "Japaneseness" to claim the rare ability to transcend the seemingly rigid racial, ethnic, cultural, and national categories.

This dissertation received inspiration from Klein's concept of Cold War Orientalism and aimed to develop a discussion of the agency of individuals who defied or worked against the discursive power of Orientalism. By focusing on the three Nisei cultural producers, I demonstrated how those who were vulnerable to an Orientalizing lens sometimes consciously

took advantage of it to promote their businesses and other times actively defied it and shaped their own identities.

There are two major limitations to my dissertation that I need to address. First is that I occasionally rely heavily on secondary sources when discussing some of the three Nisei's works due to having been unable to visit the actual sites where they are located. A firsthand observation of Noguchi's garden at UNESCO headquarters or one at Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book Library, for example, would have enabled a more thorough analysis of the aesthetic side of the work. This is something that I hope to work on as I further develop ideas in this dissertation for my future scholarship.

Second is that the scope of my research does not include an examination of Noguchi, Nakashima, and Yamasaki's female contemporaries. Scholars have recently produced important works on artists such as Ruth Asawa and Mine Okubo.[5] To be a Japanese American and a female in the mid-twentieth-century art world was doubly challenging. Women of color rarely had access to careers in the artistic sphere, as the professional network of artists was based on fraternity. Being marginalized, they were disadvantaged in acquiring beneficial connections that would lead them to jobs in the exclusively male sphere.

Not only the male-dominant nature of the art world but also the gender norms of the period restricted opportunities for them. The Victorian cult of domesticity discouraged women from getting extensive education or mobility and instead encouraged them to concentrate on household chores. The female Nisei artists therefore had to constantly work their ways out of the containment of the home. Examining their lives along with those of Noguchi, Nakashima, and

[5] Greg Robinson and Elena Tajima Creef, *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road* (Seattle: University of Washington Press 2008); Daniell Cornell et al., *The Sculpture of Ruth Asawa: Contours in the Air* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

Yamasaki would add a depth to the discussion on Nisei's identities, especially enriching the analysis on the aspect of gender. I intend to explore how a comparative examination of these cultural producers could be done in the most effective way.

Albeit these limitations, I hope my work provides some groundwork for future studies that will promote further discussion on complicated workings of the discourse of Orientalism. It might seem that so much research has been done on the Nisei generation already that there are few things left to be unearthed. However, it is critically important to continue to investigate the meanings of the racism, incarceration, and stereotyping that the Nisei faced and how they navigated their ways through challenging circumstances. The relevance of these studies is increasing because of what is currently happening in American politics. At the time of this writing in February 2017, we are witnessing the new administration's immigration policies that terrifyingly resemble Executive Order 9066 and the racial profiling that Japanese Americans were unreasonably subjected to, with which I opened my dissertation. Art and architectural critics, along with journalists, are pointing out this parallel as they emphasize the importance of revisiting Noguchi's, Nakashima's, and Yamasaki's legacies.[6] I hope my dissertation also provides a means for academic and non-academic readers to look at American history from a minority's perspective and encourages them to ponder the impact of the discursive power of

[6] Jason Farago, "Isamu Noguchi's Efforts to Improve Life in an Internment Camp," *New York Times*, January 19, 2017, accessed February 2, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/19/arts/design/isamu-noguchis-efforts-to-improve-life-in-an-internment-camp.html?_r=0; Kathleen Massara, "The Japanese-American Artist Who Went to the Camps to Help," *New Yorker*, January 31, 2017, accessed February 2, 2017, http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-japanese-american-artist-who-went-to-the-camps-to-help?mbid=social_facebook; Alexandra Lange, "The Forgotten History of Japanese-American Designers' World War II Internment: Revisiting the Link between Detention and Design History, 75 Years after FDR's Executive Order," *Curbed*, January 31, 2017, accessed February 2, 2017, http://www.curbed.com/2017/1/31/14445484/japanese-designers-wwii-internment.

Orientalism on minorities' lives, without which we are unable to grasp what is at the basis of current issues.

Ronald Takaki explains the "Master Narrative of American History" as a powerful and popular but inaccurate story that promotes the idea that America is a white country and designates non-whites as the "Other."[7] Keeping oneself to the myopic view of the "Master Narrative of American History" and being unwilling to learn about Japanese Americans' and other minorities' histories threatens the healthy, democratic environment for discussion that is based on mutual respect and understanding. I hope my work contributes to keeping and enhancing the space where people from different backgrounds can work together to understand not only different ways of thinking but also how the differences in opinions are created through the particular reality in which individuals live.

[7] Ronald T. Takaki, *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*, rev. ed. (New York: Back Bay Books, 2008), 4.

## Bibliography

**Books, Journal Articles, and Dissertations**


Allison Cort, Louise, and Bert Winther-Tamaki. *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics: A Close Embrace of the Earth*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Altshuler, Bruce. *Isamu Noguchi*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1994.

Apostolos-Cappadona, Diane, and Bruce Altshuler, eds. *Isamu Noguchi: Essays and Conversations*. New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994.

Ashton, Dore. *Noguchi East and West*. New York: Knopf, 1992.

Azuma, Eiichiro. *Between Two Empires: Race, History, and Transnationalism in Japanese America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Banet-Weiser, Sarah. *Authentic TM: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture*. New York: New York University Press, 2012.

Belgrad, Daniel. *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Belmonte, Laura A. *Selling the American Way: U.S. Propaganda and the Cold War*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.

Benedict, Ruth. *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946.

Bourdieu, Pierre. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993.

———. "The Forms of Capital." In Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education, edited by John G. Richardson, 241–258. New York: Greenwood, 1986.

Bristol, Katharine G. "The Pruitt-Igoe Myth." *Journal of Architectural Education* 44, no. 3 (May 1991): 163–171.

Chan, Sucheng. *Asian Americans: An Interpretive History*. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991.

Cheah, Pheng, and Bruce Robbins, eds. *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998.

Cheng, Cindy I-Fen. *Citizens of Asian America: Democracy and Race during the Cold War*. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Coleman, James William. *The New Buddhism: The Western Transformation of an Ancient Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Cornell, Daniell, et al. *The Sculpture of Ruth Asawa: Contours in the Air*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

"The Craftsmanship Medal for 1952 to George Nakashima." *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* (July 1952): 4

Darton, Eric. *Divided We Stand: A Biography of New York's World Trade Center*. New York: Basic Books, 1999.

Duus, Masayo. *Isamu Noguchi: Journey without Borders*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006.

———. *Isamu Noguchi: shukumei no ekkyosha*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2003.

Frascina, Francis. "The Politics of Representation." In *Modernism in Dispute: Art since the Forties*, edited by Paul Wood. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993, 77–169.

Friedman, Alice T. *American Glamour and the Evolution of Modern Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010.

Friedman, Martin L. *Noguchi's Imaginary Landscapes: An Exhibition*. Minneapolis: The Center, 1978.
Fujitani, Takashi. *Race for Empire: Koreans as Japanese and Japanese as Americans during World War II*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.
Gibson, Ann Eden. *Abstract Expressionism: Other Politics*. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1997.
Gillespie, Angus Kress. *Twin Towers: The Life of New York City's World Trade Center*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1999.
Glanz, James, and Eric Lipton. *City in the Sky: The Rise and Fall of the World Trade Center*. New York: Times Books, 2003.
Gleason, William A. *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature*. New York: New York University Press, 2011.
Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. *Issei, Nisei, War Bride: Three Generations of Japanese American Women in Domestic Service*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986.
Greenberg, Clement. "Towards a Newer Laocoon" (1940). In *Clement Greenberg: The Collected Essays and Criticism*, edited by John O'Brian. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, 23–38.
Guilbaut, Serge. *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.
Hayashi, Brian Masaru. *Democratizing the Enemy: The Japanese American Internment*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
Hirabayashi, Lane Ryo. *Japanese American Resettlement through the Lens: Hikaru Iwasaki and the WRA's Photographic Section, 1943–1945*. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2009.
Ichioka, Yuji. *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924*. New York: Free Press, 1988.
Iizuka, Makiko. *9.11 no hyoteki o tsukutta otoko: tensai to sabetsu: kenchikuka Minoru Yamasaki no shogai* [*The man who created a target of 9.11: genius and discrimination: the life of architect Minoru Yamasaki*]. Tokyo: Kodansha, 2010.
Inoue, Shoichi. *Tsukurareta katsura rikyu shinwa* [The made-up myth of Katsura Imperial Villa]. Tokyo: Kobundo, 1986.
Isozaki, Arata. *Japan-ness in Architecture*. Translated by Sabu Kohso. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006.
Iwamura, Jane Naomi. *Virtual Orientalism: Asian Religions and American Popular Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
Jacobs, Jane. *Death and Life of Great American Cities*. New York: Random House, 1961.
Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
Jencks, Charles. *Modern Movements in Architecture*, 2nd ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1985.
Kamei, Shunsuke. "The Sacred Land of Liberty: Images of America in Nineteenth-Century Japan." In *Mutual Images: Essays in American-Japanese Relations*, edited by Akira Iriye. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975, 55–72.
Kitamura, Hiroshi. *Screening Enlightenment: Hollywood and the Cultural Reconstruction of Defeated Japan*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010.
Klein, Christina. *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945–1961*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Kuh, Katharine. *The Artist's Voice: Talks with Seventeen Artists*. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.
Kurashige, Lon. *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934-1990*. Berkeley: University of California Press 2002.
Kurashige, Scott. *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008.
Lipstadt, Hélène. "Can 'Art Professions' Be Bourdieuean Fields of Cultural Production? The Case of the Architecture Competition." *Cultural Studies* 17 (2003): 390–418.
Loeffler, Jane C. *The Architecture of Diplomacy: Building America's Embassies*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1998.
Lowe, Lisa. *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.
Luhr, Eileen. "Seeker, Surfer, Yogi: The Progressive Religious Imagination and the Cultural Politics of Place in Encinitas, California." *American Quarterly* 67, no. 4 (December 2015): 1169–1193.
Lyford, Amy. *Isamu Noguchi's Modernism: Negotiating Race, Labor, and Nation, 1930–1950*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013.
———. "Noguchi, Sculptural Abstraction, and the Politics of Japanese American Internment." *Art Bulletin* 85, no. 1 (March 2003): 137–151.
Marchetti, Gina. *Romance and the "Yellow Peril": Race, Sex, and Discursive Strategies in Hollywood Fiction*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.
May, Elaine Tyler. *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*. New York: Basic Books, 1988.
McAlister, Melani. *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East, 1945–2000*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
McDonald, Gay. "The 'Advance' of American Postwar Design in Europe: MoMA and the *Design for Use, USA* Exhibition 1951–1953." *Design Issues* 24 (Spring 2008): 15–27.
Merrill, Todd, and Julie V Iovine. *Modern Americana: Studio Furniture from High Craft to High Glam*. New York: Rizzoli, 2008.
Mignolo, Walter. "The Many Faces of Cosmo-polis: Border Thinking and Critical Cosmopolitanism." *Public Culture* 12, no. 3 (Fall 2000): 721–748.
Miller, Judith. *20th Century Design: The Definitive Illustrated Sourcebook*. London: Miller's, 2009.
Nakashima, George. *The Soul of a Tree: A Woodworker's Reflections*. New York: Kodansha International, 1981.
Nakashima, Mira. *Nature, Form, & Spirit: The Life and Legacy of George Nakashima*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2003.
Niimi, Ryu. "Interia toiu yutopia: Kenmochi Isamu eno josho" [Utopia of interior: introduction to Kenmochi Isamu]. In *Japanizu modan: Kenmochi Isamu to sono sekai* [*Japanese modern: Isamu Kenmochi and his world*], edited by Hitoshi Mori. Tokyo: Kokusho Kankokai, 2007, 24–31.
———. "The Modern Primitive: Discourses of the Visual Arts in Japan in the 1950s." In *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics: A Close Embrace of the Earth*, edited by Louise Allison Cort and Bert Winther-Tamaki, translated by Reiko Tomii. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, 87–101.
Noguchi, Isamu. *A Sculptor's World*. New York: Harper & Row, 1968.

Nute, Kevin. *Frank Lloyd Wright and Japan: The Role of Traditional Japanese Art and Architecture in the Work of Frank Lloyd Wright*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993.
Oda, Meredith. "Rebuilding Japantown: Japanese Americans in Transpacific San Francisco during the Cold War." *Pacific Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (February 2014): 57–91.
Oguma, Eiji. *"Minshu" to "aikoku": sengo Nihon no nashonarizumu to kokyosei* [*"Democracy" and "patriotism": nationalism and the sense of public in postwar Japan*]. Tokyo: Shinyosha, 2002.
———. *Tanitsu minzoku shinwa no kigen: "Nihonjin" no jigazo no keifu* [*The origin of the myth of the homogeneous nation: a genealogy of the self-image of the "Japanese"*]. Tokyo: Shinyosha, 1995.
Polcari, Stephen. *Abstract Expressionism and the Modern Experience*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991.
Prevots, Naima. *Dance for Export: Cultural Diplomacy and the Cold War*. Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1998
Rainwater, L., and W. Yancey. *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967.
Robin, Ron. *Enclaves of America: The Rhetoric of American Political Architecture Abroad, 1900–1965*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992.
Robins, Anthony. *The World Trade Center*. Englewood, Fla.: Pineapple Press, 1987.
Robinson, Greg. *After Camp: Portraits in Midcentury Japanese American Life and Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012.
Robinson, Greg, and Elena Tajima Creef. *Miné Okubo: Following Her Own Road*. Seattle: University of Washington Press 2008.
Rychlak, Bonnie, et al. *Design: Isamu Noguchi and Isamu Kenmochi*. New York: Five Ties Pub, 2007.
Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
Salomon, David. "One Thing or Another: The World Trade Center and the Implosion of Modernism." PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 2004.
Seemann, Howard. "Yamasaki Work Reflects 'Visual Experience.'" *Daily Tribune*, Royal Oak, Michigan, February 11, 1964.
Scully, Vincent. *American Architecture and Urbanism*. New York: Praeger, 1969.
Sherif, Ann. *Japan's Cold War: Media, Literature, and the Law*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2009.
Shibusawa, Naoko. *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006.
Sugiyama, Makiko. *Banraisha: Taniguchi Yoshiro to Isamu Noguchi no kyososhi* [Banraisha: Taniguchi Yoshiro and Isamu Noguchi's concerto]. Tokyo: Kashima shuppan kai, 2006.
Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996.
Susman, Warren I. *Culture as History*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984.
Suzuki, D. T. *Zen and Japanese Culture*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1959.
———. *Zen Buddhism and Its Influence on Japanese Culture*. Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Society, 1938.
Takahashi, Jere. *Nisei/Sansei: Shifting Japanese American Identities and Politics*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997.

Takaki, Ronald T. *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America*. Revised edition. New York: Back Bay Books, 2008.
———. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1989.
Tange, Kenzo. *Katsura: Tradition and Creation in Japanese Architecture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960.
Tange, Kenzo, and Terunobu Fujimori. *Tange Kenzo*. Tokyo: Shinkenchikusha, 2002.
Taut, Bruno. *Houses and People of Japan*. Tokyo: Sanseido, 1937.
Treib, Marc. *Noguchi in Paris: The Unesco Garden*. San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2003.
Von Eschen, Penny M. *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004.
Wallance, Don. *Shaping America's Products*. New York: Reinhold, 1956.
Watanabe, Yasushi. "'Japan' through the Looking-Glass: American Influences on the Politics of Cultural Identity in the Post-War Japan." *Passages* 2, no.1 (2000): 21–36.
Winther, Bert. "The Rejection of Isamu Noguchi's Hiroshima Cenotaph: A Japanese American Artist in Occupied Japan." *Art Journal* 53, no. 4 (December 1994): 23–27.
Winther-Tamaki, Bert. *Art in the Encounter of Nations: Japanese and American Artists in the Early Postwar Years*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001.
———. "The Ceramic Art of Isamu Noguchi: A Close Embrace of the Earth." In *Isamu Noguchi and Modern Japanese Ceramics: A Close Embrace of the Earth*, edited by Louise Allison Cort and Bert Winther-Tamaki. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
———. "Minoru Yamasaki: Contradictions of Scale in the Career of the Nisei Architect of the World's Largest Building." *Amerasia Journal* 20, no. 3 (2000): 163–188.
Wong, Laura Elizabeth. "Cultural Agency: UNESCO's Major Project on the Mutual Appreciation of Eastern and Western Cultural Values, 1957–1966." PhD diss., Harvard University, 2006.
Wu, Ellen D. *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2014.
Yamasaki, Minoru. *A Life in Architecture*. New York: Weatherhill, 1979.
Yano, Christine R. *Airborne Dreams: "Nisei" Stewardesses and Pan American World Airways*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
Yoshihara, Mari. *Embracing the East: White Women and American Orientalism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
Yoshimi, Shunya. "'America' as Desire and Violence: Americanization in Postwar Japan and Asia during the Cold War." *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 4, no. 3 (2003): 433–450.
Yu, Henry. *Thinking Orientals: Migration, Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

**Newspaper and Magazine Articles**

"After Hours." *Harper's Magazine* (July 1, 1955): 81.
"Architecture to Represent America Abroad." *Architectural Record* 117 (May 1955): 187.
"Architect Yamasaki Wins '64 Horatio Alger Award." *Detroit News*, April 17, 1964. Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
Bourne, Russell. "American Architect Yamasaki." *Architectural Forum* 109, no. 2 (August 1958): 84–85, 166, 168.

Breitmeyer, Eleanor. “Social Scene: Yamasaki, First Wife Remarried.” *Detroit News*, July 31, 1969. Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
Bruning, Fred. “His Baby Stands Tall on Manhattan’s Skyline.” *Newsday*, September 27, 1973. Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
“A Compliment to Traditional Japanese Architecture.” *Architectural Record* 123 (February 1958): 157–159.
“A Conversation with Yamasaki.” *Architectural Forum* 111, no. 1 (July 1959): 110–118.
Corcoran, John. “George Nakashima: A Designer Who Works by Hand.” *Science Illustrated* (1948): 80, 82.
“Craftsman at Work.” *New York Herald Tribune*, Today’s Living, February 11, 1962.
“The Craftsman: Fulfilling Our Need and Nostalgia for Wood.” *Life*, July 6, 1970.
“Don’t Use Japanese as Models for Negros, Enomoto Tells Whites.” *New York Nichibei*, January 2, 1969.
Drexler, Arthur. “Noguchi, Traveling Sculptor Pauses in Japan.” *Interiors* 110, no. 9 (April 1951): 140–145.
Ellis, Andrew. “Bucks County’s George Nakashima: Serene and Simple Furniture from a Troubled and Complex Man.” *Sunday Bulletin Magazine* (January 28, 1968): 8–9. George Nakashima Papers, James A. Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.
“Garden of Peace.” *UNESCO Courier* (November 1958): 32–33.
“George Nakashima’s Furniture, House, and Way of Life.” *House and Home* 1, no. 3 (March 1952): 81.
“George Nakashima: His Furniture, His House, His Way of Life.” *House and Home* (Mach 1952): 82.
“Go West, Everybody.” *Time*, April 27, 1962.
“A Handsome Outpost in Japan.” *Architectural Forum* 108 (February 1958): 71.
Hasegawa, Saburo. “Isamu Noguchi tono hibi” [“Days with Isamu Noguchi”]. *Sansai* (August 1950): 7–9.
———. “Noguchi Nihon” [Noguchi Japan]. *Bijutsu techo* 33 (August 1950): 58–60.
Hess, Thomas B. “Isamu Noguchi ’46.” *Art News* (September 1946): 34.
Hill, Gladwin. “Japanese in U.S. Gaining Equality: Housing Is Only Conspicuous Barrier Remaining and It Is Expected to Fall.” *New York Times*, August 12, 1956.
“Historian Says Japanese Are Becoming ‘Instrument of White Racism.’” *New York Nichibei,* January 9, 1969.
“Horatio Alger Awards Go to Autry, Thornton.” *Los Angeles Times*, May 14, 1964.
“How to Tell Japs from the Chinese.” *Life,* December 22, 1941.
“How to Tell Your Friends from the Japs.” *Time*, December 22, 1941.
Huxtable, Ada Louise. “Big but Not So Bold: Trade Center Towers Are Tallest, But Architecture Is Smaller Scale.” *New York Times*, April 5, 1973.
———. “Philip Johnson and the Temper of These Times.” *New York Times*, May 13, 1979.
Ikeda, Kiyoshi. “Tetsugaku teki chokoku” [“Philosophical Sculpture”]. *Mainichi shimbun*, November 18, 1951.
Inokuma, Genichiro. “Isamu Noguchi no sakuhin” [The work of Isamu Noguchi]. *Kyoiku bijutsu* 11, no. 12 (1950): 8–9.
———. “Mu” [Nothingness]. *Mizue* (October 1950): 14–21.
Inokuma, Genichiro, Kozo Inoue, and Masatomo Kawai. “Sannin kandan” [Conversation among three]. *Mita hyoron* 928 (August 1991): 82–93, Keio University Art Center, Tokyo, Japan.

"Inouye Fits Nisei in US-Japan Role." *Hokubei Shimpo*, December 10, 1959.
"Interview: I Begin with the Wood." *Dezain* 6 (1968): 69.
"Isamu Noguchi shi nihon no avangyarudisuto to kataru" [Isamu Noguchi Talks with Japanese Avant-Gardists]. *Atorie* 283 (August 1950): 32–33.
"Isamu-san & Shirley Too." *Time*, November 3, 1952.
"JACL-Nisei Can Be Helpful in Building Community of Free Asia." *Pacific Citizen*, August 3, 1962.
"'Jewel on Stilts' Rises Over Lily Pool." *Detroit Free Press*, April 29, 1957.
Kaufmann Jr., Edgar J. "Nakashima, American Craftsman." *Arts in America* (December 1955): 31–32.
"Kenchiku nimo jocho o" [Need of atmosphere for architecture]. *Mainichi Shimbun*, May 15, 1960.
Kenmochi, Isamu. "Japanizu modan ka Japonica sutairu ka" [Japanese Modern or Japonica Style]. *Kogei nyusu* [*Industrial news*] 22, no. 9 (September 1954): 2–7.
———. "Kogei shidosho ni okeru Isamu Noguchi" [Isamu Noguchi at the Industrial Arts Research Institute]. *Kogei nyusu* [*Industrial news*] 18, no. 10 (October 1950): 19–23.
Kojiro, Yuichiro. "George Nakashima: sekai no bokusho o tazunete" [A visit with a world famous woodworker, George Nakashima]. *Katei gaho* (September 1978): 120.
Lessenberry, Jack. "Minoru Yamasaki: Designs to Serve People." *Toledo Magazine the Sunday Blade*, July 31, 1983.
Louchheim, Aline B. "Noguchi and 'Sculptured Gardens." *New York Times*, September 30, 1951.
Lutz, William W. "Our Buildings Are Useful, and That's about All." *Detroit News*, May 6, 1958. Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
Marlin, William. "The Ides of Pruitt-Igoe." *Christian Science Monitor*, August 8, 1972.
Matsumoto, Narao. "New US Consular Building in Kobe Nearing Completion." *Mainichi*, December 4, 1956.
Michenfelder, Joseph M. M. "George Nakashima: Artist in Wood." *Maryknoll* (March 1960): 5.
"Minoru Yamasaki Humbly Accepts 1961–62 'Nisei of Biennium' Honors." *Pacific Citizen*, August 3, 1962.
"Modan de nihon shumi mo" [Modern and Japanese style]. *Shinko Shimbun*, November 29, 1956.
"Modernized Farm House." *Architectural Forum* 95 (December 1951): 111–113.
Nakashima, George. "A Feeling for Material." *California Arts and Architecture* (1941): 30–31.
"New Forms for Fireplaces." *Life*, December 7, 1953.
"New Lamps from the Old World." *House and Home* (April 1952): 148.
"New Shapes for Lighting: Sculptor's Lamps Are Dim, Decorative." *Life*, March 10, 1952.
"Nichibei kan no shomondai ni nisei no kenkai o tsutau" [Communicating Nisei's view on issues between Japan and the United States]. *Rafu Shimpo*, February 6, 1957.
"Nihon jocho tataeta biru" [Building with Japanese atmosphere]. *Kobe Shimbun*, January 25, 1957.
"Noguchi in Kitakamura." *Interiors* 112 (November 1952): 117–120, 171, 172.
Noguchi, Isamu. "Akari." *Geijutsu shincho* 5 (August 1954): 194.
———. "Geijutsu to shudan shakai" [Art and Community]. *Bijutsu techo* 31 (July 1950): 3–5.
———. "Ishi: Pari no 'Nippon no niwa' o tsukuru" [Stone: Making a "Japanese Garden" in Paris]. *Geijutsu Shincho* 8 (July 1957): 153–157.
———. "Kanga na Nippon Ryokou" [Quiet and graceful Japan trip]. *Bungei shunju* 28, no. 12 (September 1950): 184–187.

———. “New Stone Gardens.” *Art in America* 52 (June 1964): 84–89.
———. “Projects: Isamu Noguchi.” *Arts and Architecture* 69 (June 1952): 24–27.
———. “Recent Work Exhibited in Japan.” *Arts and Architecture* 67, no. 11 (November 1950): 26–28.
———. “Sekai ni niwa o tsukuru” [Making gardens in the world]. *Geijutsu shincho* 11, no. 7 (July 1960): 72–80.
———. “Shigoto ni tsuite” [On work]. *Shin kenchiku* 27, no. 2 (February 1952): 59.
———. “A Stage, Quietly Dramatic.” *Kokusai kenchiku* 17, no. 5 (November 1950): 31.
———. “Watashi no mita Nippon” [Japan as I saw it]. *Geijutsu shincho* 2, no. 10 (1951): 100–106.
Noguchi, Yonejiro. “Mitabi Tagoru ni atau” [To Tagore for the Third Time]. *Yomiuri Shimbun*, December 13, 1938.
Okamoto, Taro. “Isamu Noguchi no shigoto” [“Isamu Noguchi’s Work”]. *Bijutsu Techo* 63 (December1952): 43–45.
———. “Jomon doki ron: yojigen to no taiwa” [An essay on Jomon earthenware: conversation with the fourth dimension] (1952). *Bijutsu techo* 52 (September 2000): 51–66.
“One Glass Wall Made an Old House New.” *House Beautiful* (February 1952): 80–81.
Pepis, Betty. “Handcrafts of U.S. in Museum Exhibit: Metropolitan Shows Display to Be Sent on Tour Abroad by State Department.” *New York Times*, October 10, 1952.
Perron, Robert. “George Nakashima: An Artist Who Makes Tables and Chairs.” *Decorating a House and Garden Guide* (Fall/Winter 1976–1977), “Printed material, magazine clippings, undated, 1955-57, 1973, 1977, 1981-1990,” George Nakashima Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Museum, DC.
Peter, John. “Nakashima and Son.” *Look* (April 1959): 70.
Petersen, William. “Success Story, Japanese-American Style.” *New York Times Magazine* (January 9, 1966): 21, 33, 36, 38, 40, 43.
Plotnicov, Miriam. “A Way To Be Free: Nakashima’s Life.” *Smithonian Magazine* (September 1972): 62–3.
“The Road to Xanadu.” *Time*, January 18, 1963.
Schonberg, Harold C. “Isamu Noguchi, a Kind of Throwback.” *New York Times Magazine*, April 14, 1968.
Shirley, David L. “Noguchi.” *Newsweek* 29 (April 1968): 95.
Sterling, Pauline. “Mrs. Yamasaki…: A Modern Design.” *Detroit Free Press*, September 20, 1959.
Strachan, Margaret Pitcairn. “Beauty Has Place in Our Buildings, Says Yamasaki.” *Seattle Times*, April 24, 1962. Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
Tajiri, Larry S. “Vagaries.” *Pacific Citizen*, May 10, 1957.
Takiguchi, Shuzo. “Gendai bunmei to no taiketsu: Isamu Noguchi o mite” [“Confrontation with modern civilization: seeing Isamu Noguchi”]. *Yomiuri shimbun*, evening edition, October 15, 1952.
———. “Isamu Noguchi shoron” [An essay on Isamu Noguchi] (1952). In Shuzo Takiguchi, *Shiro to kuro no danso* [*White and black fragmentary thoughts*]. Tokyo: Genki shobo, 2011, 88–91.
Taniguchi, Yoshiro. “Bijutsu no atarashii kaitakusha” [“A New Pioneer of Art”]. *Sekai bijutsu zenshu geppo* 1 (June 1950): 19–20.

———. “Isamu Noguchi ten no tenji” [The display of the Isamu Noguchi exhibit]. *Bijutsu techo* 35 (October 1950): 20–22.
———. “‘Mu’ no tamashi” [“The Soul of ‘Mu’”]. *Mainichi shimbun*, November 30, 1951.
Taylor, Paul. “Nakashima’s Secret for Riches and Happiness.” *Today*, February 17, 1974. George Nakashima Papers, James A. Michener Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.
Tendler, Louis. “Kobe Award Is Tribute to Detroiter.” *Detroit News*, April 26, 1954, Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
Toishigawa, Lisa. “Nisei Architect Finds Race No Detriment to Opportunity in United States.” *Hawaii Hochi*, September 26, 1963.
“Total Sculpture.” *New Yorker*, December 14, 1963.
Tyler, Parker. “Fourteen Minus One.” *View* (Fall 1946): 35–37.
“USA Abroad.” *Architectural Forum* 107 (December 1957): 120.
“U.S. Architecture Abroad.” *Architectural Forum* 98 (March 1953): 101–103.
*USIS Feature*. Undated, circa 1960. Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
“Yama: The People’s Architect.” *Magazine of the Detroit News*, October 24, 1982. Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
Yamasaki, Minoru. “A Humanist Architecture for America and Its Relation to the Traditional Architecture of Japan.” *RIBA* 68, no. 3 (January 1961): 94–99.
———. “Visual Delight in Architecture.” *Architectural Record* (November 1955). Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
“Yamasaki’s Architecture Soars to ‘Great Heights.’” *Birmingham Eccentric*, Michigan, January 30, 1964. Minoru Yamasaki Papers, Walter P. Reuther Library, Detroit, Michigan.
“Yamasaki’s Serene Campus Center.” *Architectural Forum* 109 (August 1958): 78–79.

**Online Sources**

Asaka, Megan. “Resettlement.” *Densho Encyclopedia*. http://encyclopedia.densho.org/Resettlement/.
Farago, Jason. “Isamu Noguchi’s Efforts to Improve Life in an Internment Camp.” *New York Times*, January 19, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/19/arts/design/isamu-noguchis-efforts-to-improve-life-in-an-internment-camp.html?_r=0.
Lange, Alexandra. “The Forgotten History of Japanese-American Designers’ World War II Internment: Revisiting the Link between Detention and Design History, 75 Years after FDR’s Executive Order.” *Curbed*, January 31, 2017. http://www.curbed.com/2017/1/31/14445484/japanese-designers-wwii-internment.
Massara, Kathleen. “The Japanese-American Artist Who Went to the Camps to Help.” *New Yorker*, January 31, 2017. http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-japanese-american-artist-who-went-to-the-camps-to-help?mbid=social_facebook.
Shimano, Eddie. “Designed for Living: George Nakashima Handcrafts a House in Pennsylvania.” *Scene the Pictorial Magazine* 2, no. 1 (May 1950). http://ddr.densho.org/ddr/densho/266/18/files/?page=2.
Truman, Harry S. “Special Message to Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine.” March 12, 1947, Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, Independence, Missouri. http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/pdfs/5-9.pdf.

**Archival Documents**

Hasegawa, Saburo. "Isamu Noguchi: hito to sakuhin" [Isamu Noguchi: the person and work"]. In the 1950 Mitsukoshi exhibit catalogue, Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York.

Jones, Mabel Martin. Letter, September 30, 1942. "Nakashima, George Katsutoshi," Japanese-American Internee Data File, Record Group 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Mott, June. Undated letter. "Nakashima, George Katsutoshi," Japanese-American Internee Data File, Record Group 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority, National Archives at College Park, Maryland.

Nakashima, George. Manuscript for the speech to be delivered at the New York Herald Tribune Forum on October 19, 1953, "Writings by Nakashima, undated, 1953," George Nakashima Papers, James A. Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

———. Untitled manuscript. "Writings by Nakashima, undated, 1953," George Nakashima Papers, James A. Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania.

"Nakashima, George Katsutoshi." Japanese-American Internee Data File, RG 210: Records of the War Relocation Authority. National Archives at College Park, College Park, MD.

Noguchi, Isamu. Interview transcript by Kazue Kobata, 1986. Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York.

Noguchi, Isamu, to John Collier. Letter, February 4, 1953. Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York.

Noguchi, Isamu, to Michel Dard. Letter, January 8, 1957. Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York.

Noguchi, Isamu, to Toru Hagiwara. Letter, January 9, 1957. Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York.

Noguchi, Isamu, to Toshikazu Kase. Letter, September 24, 1956. Noguchi Museum, Long Island City, New York.